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When the Song Begins

J. R. Miller, D.D.

1. Christian Life.

When the Song Begins

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Published, September, 1905

PREFACE

THE *chapters of this little book are intended to help people in learning how to live. They are meant to translate the teachings of the Christian Scriptures into the language of the common days and the common experiences of life, so that even a child may understand them. Such a book as this may not be called Literature, but if it helps some people to live more beautifully, more victoriously, more usefully, it will have served its mission, and made itself worth while.*

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OPTUN 31 DEC '37

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When the Song Begins

Back of the gloom—
The bloom!
Back of the strife—
Sweet life.
And flowering meadows that glow and gleam,
Where the winds sing joy and the daisies dream,
And the sunbeams color the quickening clod,
And faith in the future, and trust in God.
Back of the gloom—
The bloom!

Fronting the night—
The light!
Under the snows—
The rose!
And the vales sing joy to the misty hills,
And the wild winds ripple it down the rills;
And the far stars answer the song that swells
With all the music of all the bells!
Fronting the night—
The light!

—Frank L. Stanton.

CHAPTER FIRST

When the Song Begins

HEY have a saying in the East that in Oriental countries the birds never sing, the flowers have no fragrance, and the women never smile. Heathen religions put no sweetness into life, kindle no joy in the heart, start no songs. They do not comfort sorrow nor wipe away tears. But the religion of the Bible is one of gladness. It teaches us to sing, not only on the happy days, but on the dark days as well.

The Old Testament has much music in it. Then the New Testament is full of song. It opens with an overture by a great choir of angels. The first message to the shepherds, announcing the birth of the Saviour, told of joy for all who would accept it. Christ marked out the way of joy in all His teaching. He offered rest of soul to all who would come

to Him, take His yoke upon them and learn of Him. He said He would give His own peace to those who would let it into their hearts. He expressed a desire that His joy might be fulfilled in the lives of His friends. He bade His followers be of good cheer, because He had overcome the world.

Then after the Resurrection and Ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, we find the church a company of rejoicing people. "They took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." They met persecution and suffering, but nothing could silence their songs. Their joy was quenchless. St. Paul, the greatest sufferer of all, was likewise the most joyous of all. No chains, no dungeons, no scourgings, no losses, could stop his singing. Out of his prison life he wrote to one of the churches, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice."

But what is the secret? When does the song begin? What is it that gives to the believer in God this quenchless joy? In the record of the opening of the temple by Hezekiah occurs

a sentence which suggests the answer. The sacrifices were ready for offering. At the same time the great temple choir was waiting, ready to break forth into song. But not a note was heard until the sacrifices began to burn upon the altar. The record is, "When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also." The moment the offering was laid upon the altar and the holy fire began to consume it, the great choir began to sing.

These ancient burnt-offerings were an expression of personal devotion and consecration to God. It is when this surrender of our lives to God is made, and not till then, that the song begins in our hearts.

Yet somehow a good many people seem to think a religious life cannot be a joyous life. They get the idea that it is a life of self-sacrifice, but they cannot think of self-sacrifice as joyous. One man said to another, referring to something they were talking about, "I suppose it must be my duty, because I hate it so." That is the way many

people think about duty. But really there is no other life so full of deep, abiding joy as the life of self-sacrifice in the service of Christ.

It is well worth while for us to learn this lesson. Work is immeasurably harder if we do it only as task-work, because we must. No one can ever make much of his life if he works reluctantly, perfunctorily. Joy gives strength and skill. And the lowliest tasks may be made a delight, if only we think of them as part of God's will for us. No doubt Jesus was an enthusiastic carpenter. He went out each morning to His day's tasks with a song. It ought to help other carpenters and all of us in our common vocations to work gladly to remember that our Master toiled too, wrought with His hands, and did it cheerfully, sweetly, songfully.

"*Yes, yes, a carpenter, same trade as mine.*
It warms my heart as I read that line.
I can stand the hard work, I can stand the poor pay,
For I'll see that Carpenter at no distant day."

There are transforming motives if only we can get them into our hearts. Love has power to transfigure the dreary tasks into delights. You have seen a young girl, light-hearted, care-free, with scarcely ever a serious thought in her mind. She seemed to think only of herself. She was self-indulgent, never denying herself anything she wanted. She never sacrificed her own comfort for another. By and by you saw her a mother, with a baby in her arms. Now her life was altogether changed. Love had blossomed out and possessed her. She cared now for her child with intense and self-forgetful devotion. She thought no longer of her own ease or comfort. There was no more in her any spirit of self-indulgence. Then she did everything, the dreariest task, gladly, joyously. There was no complaint, no fretting. Love had taught her the lesson of self-devotion, and her heart sang as she wrought.

There are men who once had little interest in their work, who did it only because they must, who were indolent, self-indulgent, extrava-

gant. By and by they became heads of little families, for whose wants they must provide. Then all was changed. They went to their tasks with a new zest. Love put energy into their spirit, strength into their arms, skill into their fingers. They never had known such happiness before. "When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also." Men do not know how much of their enthusiasm in bearing their burdens, in enduring their struggles, in meeting obstacles, in overcoming difficulties, is inspired by love for the dear ones in their homes, for whose care, comfort, and protection they are responsible. It is this love that puts the song into their hearts.

It is not the fashion to idealize fathers. Mothers are idealized, and rightly so. Mother-love is likest God's love, of all holy human passions. Mothers everywhere devote themselves to the care of their children and sacrifice their ease and strength with complete self-abandonment that they may give these children what they need. They lose their rest. They give up their own comfort. They pour

out their very life in love's ministering. No one needs to ask the motive of this holy serving and self-sacrificing. It is found in the sacredness of the home, in the little child's sick-room, in the nursery, where there always are tasks and needs. God bless the mothers. They deserve highest honor. They go through all love's services and sacrifices with a gladness that never fails. Who ever heard a true mother complain of the burdens or the cares of love? She does all cheerfully. When the self-sacrifice begins, the song begins, too; and as the burdens grow heavier, and the need for self-denial grows greater, the song becomes louder and richer in its melody.

But though there be, perhaps, less poetry in father-love, there is much in it that is very sacred and ofttimes heroic. There are fathers who live with their children with noble self-abandonment. There are men who have made a splendid success of their lives, building up a fortune, growing to honor in their profession, rising to noble character and influence, the secret of all their energy, skill,

and achievement being found in the quiet homes to which they hurry each evening when their work is done. As the responsibility of love came upon them the song began, and they went each day to take up the growing burden with increasing joy in their hearts. Love makes true men laugh at hard tasks and exhausting toil.

Human love is a marvellous transfigurer of dreary things, homely duties, dull tasks. It wakes up the best that is in life, and calls out its sweetest songs. But there is another love which has still more wondrous power—love for Christ. "Whom not having seen, we love." If only we can get this mighty motive into our hearts it will change everything in life for us. It surpasses all earthly love in its power to inspire service, sacrifice, and song. If we have not learned to sing at our work, to make monotonous duty a delight, to find joy in self-sacrifice, we need but to look at the face of Christ, remembering His love and its infinite sacrifice—for us. Then think that these things which seem so dreary, so

hard, so costly, in self-denial and sacrifice, are simply His biddings, bits of His will for us; then, as we think, love will spring up in our hearts, love for our Master, and all will be transformed, transfigured.

A singer told the story of how all had been changed for her. She sang only for ambition, because she hoped to gather fame and wealth. But one Sunday she went to sing in a prison, after the minister had preached. Among the convicts was one with strangely sad and hungry eyes. "I sang to that one man," the singer said, "and as I sang, a power that was never mine before was given me. The tears rained down the man's cheeks as he listened. Faces all about him began to soften." It was a holy moment for the singer. She had risen out of mere professionalism, and her soul had been touched and thrilled by the love of Christ. From that day all was new for her.

When does the song begin in time of sorrow? "Ah," someone says, "I cannot sing then. Surely it is not expected that I shall sing when my dead are lying before me." Yes;

the Christian is always to sing. "Rejoice always," means on the day when crape is on the door, as well as on the day when all is bright within. Some day we shall know that every sorrow in our lives held a secret of joy for us. The song begins only, however, when we submit ourselves to God in our grief, acquiescing without question in His will and opening our hearts to receive whatever blessing He has sent to us in the sorrow. Job had learned this lesson when he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." The words imply perfect trust, and at once the song began in the patriarch's life, for he added, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." So always, even in the deepest grief, when we can say and mean it, "Thy will, not mine, be done," the song begins.

One of the worst perils of Christian lives lies in the line of self-indulgence. We take too good care of ourselves. We keep ourselves back from hard tasks and stern self-denials. We choose the easy things. Consequently, we do not find the joy that is possible in Chris-

tian living. Some Christians seem never to learn the lesson at all. They go through a course of formal service, but they are never happy in it, are never enthusiastic followers of Christ. The trouble is, they have just a little religion, enough to make life harder in the way of restraint and limitation, but not enough to start the song. They measure their piety, they calculate their service, they know nothing of full abandonment to Christ. They always go the one required mile, but never go the second mile of love. There will never be any song in such Christian living. Only in entire surrender and devotion to Christ can we learn to sing the new song. If we would find joy in our religion, we must abandon ourselves altogether to Christ. Many of us serve Christ so daintily, so delicately, with so much self-reserve and withholding of ourselves from sacrifice that we never learn the reality of the joy of Christ. When we devote ourselves to Him wholly, the song will begin.

The Mystery of Suffering

"It is pleasant to think, just under the snow,
That stretches so bleak and blank and cold,
Are beauty and warmth that we cannot know—
Green fields and blossoms of gold.

"Yes, under this frozen and dumb expanse,
Ungladdened by bee or bird or flower,
A world where the leaping fountains glance,
And the buds expand, is waiting its hour."

CHAPTER SECOND

The Mystery of Suffering

THE why of suffering has ever been among the most serious problems of life. When Jesus showed sympathy with a man who had been born blind, His disciples started the question, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" They were quite sure that somebody had sinned, and that this blindness was the result. That was the common belief of those days. It was thought that anyone who suffered in misfortune or was overtaken by calamity had sinned, and that his misfortune or calamity was visited on him because of his sin.

There is much of this belief still in the world. In the "Spectator" is this message: "An old maiden gentlewoman, whom I shall conceal under the name of Nemesis, is the greatest

discoverer of judgments that I have met with. She can tell you what sin it was that set such a man's house on fire, or blew down his barns. She has a crime for every misfortune that can befall any of her acquaintance—in short, she is so good a Christian that whatever happens to herself is a trial, and whatever happens to her neighbor is a judgment."

The old question, why the good suffer and the wicked escape suffering, is to many a perplexing question. Only the other day a brilliant literary woman who has fallen into misfortune, wrote, "A depression blacker than you can conceive is now upon me. I know I never can write again. And both my sister and I are penniless—worse, in debt. . . . I write this to ask you, in view of this irremediable disaster, what you think of God." This pitiful cry is from one half-crazed by misfortune, but there are many others who, more sanely than this poor woman, persist in asking the question, in time of great trouble, "What do you think now of God?" A sorrowing father, after watching by the dying

bed of a beloved child, said, "Had it been in my power to bear her pain for her, how gladly would I have done it! I could not bear to see her suffer; how is it that God could?" The problem of the why of suffering presses on every life, on every heart, in some way, at some time. As one writes:

"This is the cry
That echoes through the wilderness of earth,
Through song and sorrow, day of death and birth:
Why?

"It is the high
Wail of the child with all his life to face,
Man's last dumb question as he reaches space:
Why?"

We remember that even Jesus, in one terrible hour on the cross, asked, "Why?" He could not understand the awful mystery of His own suffering. Faith did not lose its hold, however, for it was still, "My God, my God," even when the bitter cry was, "Why—why hast thou forsaken me?"

"His cure was this: to hold fast through the night,
Though bowed and blind with the dust of the fight—
'God, God as my God, unseen, but my right.'"

There is no one of us who may not some time cry out in the darkness, asking, "Why this pain, this suffering, this mystery of trouble?" It is a relief for us to know that the gospel has its answers for the question. Jesus gave an answer to His disciples that day on the street.

First, He told them plainly that their belief was not true. He said, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents." He did not mean that the man and his parents were sinless. He meant that the misfortune of blindness had not been brought on him by sin. Nor did He mean that sickness, blindness, and other diseases and calamities are never due to sin. Many times they are. Sin does, indeed, bring curse and calamity to many lives. But Jesus here guards His disciples against supposing that always, that as a rule, suffering comes from sin. It is a fearful mistake to say to

everyone who has trouble, that he has committed some sin and that his trouble is in punishment for it. Nor should a good man say, when he is visited by affliction, "I wonder what I have done that God is punishing me so."

Jesus did not merely say that the old belief that sin was the cause of all suffering was untrue; He gave a wonderful solution of the mystery of trouble. He said that the blindness had come upon this man, "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." We are not to speculate and guess about the cause of any man's trouble, wondering whose fault it was, but are to set about at once doing all we can to relieve his suffering or heal his hurt. This man's misfortune became an occasion to Jesus for a miracle of mercy. If it had not been for his blindness, this opportunity of manifesting this work of God would have been missed. Every time we come upon a human need, suffering or sorrow in any form, there is an opportunity for us to manifest the works of God by showing kind-

ness, by giving comfort, by helping in whatever way it may be in our power to help. If one is sick in your home or among your neighbors, it is a divine call to you to do the gentle offices of love, to minister in self-denying ways, to do the work of God beside the sick bed. That is why the suffering is permitted.

It may be the divine purpose that we ourselves shall be benefited by our trouble. No human life ever reaches its best possibilities without pain and cost. One tells of visiting a pottery and seeing a vessel whose pattern was blurred and marred, the design not brought out clearly. He asked why it was, and was told that it had not been burned enough. It would have been well worth while for the vessel to have had hotter fires and to have stayed longer in the furnace, in order to have the pattern wrought out in greater clearness and distinctness. May it not be that many of us miss much of the finer possibilities of spiritual attainment because we are not willing to suffer?

"Thou Who didst fashion man on earth to be
Strong in Thy strength, and with Thy freedom free,
Complete at last Thy great design in me.

"Cost what it may of sorrow and distress,
Of empty hands, of utter loneliness,
I dare not, Lord, be satisfied with less.

"So, Lord, complete Thy great design in me.
Give or reclaim Thy gifts, but let me be
Strong in Thy strength, and with Thy freedom free."

Sometimes we are called to suffer for the sake of others, that they may be made better. The highest honor God gives to anyone in this world is to be a helper of one's fellows. There are those whose lives shine as bright lights among men. They are usually quiet people, not much heard of on the streets. But they carry the marks of Jesus on their faces, in their characters and dispositions, and they are unselfish helpers of others. The weary come to them, and the sorrowing, the tired, and the hungry-hearted. They seem to be set apart by a holy separation as helpers and

comforters of others, as burden-bearers, as counsellors and friends of those who need such aid. Who does not crave to hold such a place of usefulness, of influence, among men? But are we willing to pay the price? No life can become strong, quiet, helpful, a rock in a weary land, a shelter from the storm, a shadow from the heat, without the experience of suffering. We must learn the lesson of beautiful life in the school of self-denial, the school of the cross.

One writes of a poet whose pen was facile, who wrote many brilliant lines. The world listened and was charmed but not helped, not inspired to better things. The poet's child died, and then he dipped his pen in his heart's blood and wrote, and the world paused and listened and was blessed and quickened to more beautiful life. Before we can do anything that is really worth while in helping our fellow-men, we must pass through a training of suffering, in which alone we can learn the lessons that will fit us for this holier service.

Another mission of suffering is for the honor

of God. Satan said Job's piety was interested piety. "Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him? . . . Thou hast blessed the work of his hands. But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he hath and he will renounce Thee to Thy face." Job was left in the hands of the Adversary to disprove this charge. His sufferings were not because of sins in himself, but that the reality of his religion might be proved.

When we are called to suffer, it may be as a witness for God. We do not know what may depend upon our faithfulness in any time of stress or trial. It may seem a small thing, for instance, to complain and fret when we are suffering, and yet it may sadly blur our witnessing. God wants us to represent Him, to illustrate the qualities in His character which He would have the world know. A Christian in a sick room is called to manifest the beauty of His Master in patience, in trust, in sweetness of spirit. A Christian in great sorrow is called to show the world the meaning of faith and faith's power to hold

the heart quiet and at peace in the bitterest experience of grief and loss. We are witnesses for God in our sufferings, and, if we would not fail Him, we must show in ourselves the power of divine grace to keep the song singing in our hearts through pain or sorrow.

There never can be any gain in asking "Why?" when we find ourselves in trouble. God has His reasons, and it is enough that He should know why He sends this or that trial into our life or our friend's life. There is always mystery. The perplexed and heart-breaking "Why?" is heard continually, wherever we go. We cannot answer it. It is not meant that we should try to answer it. The "Why?" belongs to our Father. He knows; let Him answer and let us trust and be still. The little child's experience is a very common one:

"'Why did my little sister come unless she meant to stay?
Could anybody love her more than we?' says little May.

"'Why did she go? Where did she go? What makes her stay away?
Did anybody need her more than we?' asked little May.

"Alas, these tearful questions wake sad memories to-day:
"'He needs her most Who loves her most,' is all that I can say."

That is all we need say in any of our sorrows: He needs our dear ones most Who loves them most. But that is enough for faith. God is love. He makes no mistakes.

"And so I came to thee, O Father, dear;
My lessons are so hard, my brain so weak,
Life's problems all unsolved, my way not clear—
I am so tired; I cannot think to-night—
Dear Father, take my life and make the answer right."

The Blossoming of Our Thorns

"God never would send you the darkness
If He felt you could bear the light;
But you would not cling to His guiding hand
If the way were always bright;
And you would not care to walk by faith,
Could you always walk by sight.

"'Tis true He has many an anguish
For your sorrowful heart to bear,
And many a cruel thorn-crown
For your tired head to wear;
He knows how few could reach heaven at all
If pain did not guide them there."

CHAPTER THIRD

The Blossoming of Our Thorns

A BIT of autobiography tells the story of St. Paul's thorn in the flesh. What this was, we do not know. It was given to him, however, that he should not be exalted overmuch. He had been caught up to the third heaven, where he heard unspeakable words. A man who had had such an incomparable privilege was in danger of glorying in it. Some people cannot stand much honor. A little promotion turns their heads. And spiritual pride is a withering experience. It makes a man forget his own nothingness and unworthiness. It cuts him off from God and from dependence upon God. It unfits him for being of use to men. Anything is a blessing, whatever it may cost, that keeps a man humble.

We do not know how much of St. Paul's rich,

beautiful life, his deep interest in divine things, and his noble work for his Master he owed to his thorn. We do not know how much we are indebted to the sufferings and sorrows of good men and women. The best thoughts, the richest lessons, the sweetest songs that have come down to us from the past, are the fruit of pain, of weakness, of sorrow. We cannot forget that human redemption comes to us from the cross of the Son of God. The fruit of earth's thorns may seem bitter to the taste, but it is the wholesome food of human souls. The old legend tells how all through Passion Week the crown of thorns lay upon the altar, but upon Easter morning was found changed to fragrant roses, every thorn a rose. So earth's sorrow-crowns become garlands of heavenly roses in the warmth of divine love.

There is not one of us who has not his own thorn. With one it may be a bodily infirmity or weakness. With another it is some disfigurement which cannot be removed. It may be some uncongeniality in circumstances, some-

thing which makes it hard to live beautifully. One young man finds his place of work unendurable. The men with whom he is associated are almost as bad as they can be. He is the only Christian among them, and they make it very hard for him to retain his integrity and to go on faithfully. But it may be that God wants him just where he is, that the man needs just this uncongeniality in his surroundings to bring out the best that is in him. Or it may be that Christ needs his witness in just that place. The consciousness that he is the only one the Master has there, puts upon him a grave responsibility. It may not be his privilege to leave his place; it may be his duty to stay where he is, to endure his thorn, whether it be for the purifying of his own life or for the witness he may bear for his Lord.

The Master told St. Paul that his thorn was necessary to him, to save him from becoming proud. We may think of our thorn, too, as something we need. In place of allowing it to irritate us or to spoil our life, its mission is

to make us sweet, patient, loving. Many people beseech the Lord to take away their thorn. Yet it may be that the prayer is not answered, will not be answered, should not be answered. It may be that the thorn is necessary to keep them low at God's feet. One writes:

"I knew a youth of large and lofty soul,
A soul aflame with heavenly purpose high;
Like a young eagle's, his clear, earnest eye,
Fixed on the sun, could choose no lesser goal.
For truth he lived; and love, a burning coal
From God's high altar did the fire supply
That flushed his cheeks as morning tints the sky,
And kept him pure by its divine control.

"Lately I saw him, smooth and prosperous,
Of portly presence and distinguished air.
The cynic's smile of self-content was there,
The very air about him breathed success.
Yet by the eyes of love, too plainly seen,
Appeared the wreck of what he might have been."

That is the story of the life of too many men. Prosperity led them to forget God. Even in

spiritual things, the enjoyment of great privileges sometimes makes men proud and draws them away from humble dependence upon God. We are all in danger of settling down into a spirit of ease and self-satisfaction. We have been living pretty well, we say. We have been rather good, as people go, even as Christian people go. We have done many pieces of Christian work which people praised. We seem to be helpful to others, and God is using us to be a blessing to many. This is right. It is glorious to be able to live nobly, victoriously, usefully. It is a high honor to be led up by the Master to some mountain-top of transfiguration and to see heaven opened above us, to have God use us to achieve great things for Him, to have Christ honor us by putting His Spirit in us and enabling us to witness for Him faithfully and effectively before the world. To have the Divine Spirit dwell in us, sweeten our life, transform our character, and make us a blessing to many —this is the highest honor that even heaven can confer on anyone in this present world.

But the peril comes when we ourselves become conscious of the goodness of our own lives, of the brightness of our faces, or of the sweetness of the work we are doing for our Master. Moses had been forty days with God on the Mount, and when he came down to the people they saw his face shining. The people saw it, but he did not. "Moses wist not that his face shone." That was the secret of his greatness—his humility, his unconsciousness of his own radiancy of face. If he had been aware of the glory which others saw, the glory would have faded.

There is no sin of which active, earnest, godly, and useful Christian people are so much in danger as this of spiritual pride. If it gets possession of our hearts it will blight everything beautiful in us. When a good man comes to know that he is good, his soul is in peril. When a useful man becomes aware of his great usefulness, he has passed the zenith of his worth. When a devout man, a man of prayer, knows that he is devout, that he has special power in prayer, a large part of his

power is gone. The strength of godliness lies in the absence of self-consciousness.

As we think of this, it is easy to understand St. Paul's danger after his remarkable spiritual exaltation. It is no wonder a thorn had to be given him, a torturing trouble to balance his spiritual elevation, to act as ballast to hold him close to earth. Let us not be surprised if to us likewise, after we have been greatly blessed, there is given something to keep us humble and lowly. It is well that God loves us too much to see us become inflated with spiritual self-conceit and not interfere to save us. Let us not chafe, when, after being greatly blessed in some way, a hindrance comes, a disappointment, a trial, a thorn, to break our comfort and spoil our ease. Let us accept it quietly, reverently—it is God saving us.

St. Paul tells us here also that he rejoiced in his thorn. He did not at first. He cried to heaven to have it removed. But when his Master told him that he must keep it, that he needed it, that it had in it a blessing for him,

he chafed no longer. Indeed, he made friends with it quickly, accepted it, and stopped complaining about it. That is the only right and sensible thing to do with any disagreeable, uncongenial, or painful thing we find we cannot have removed. It is God's will that it shall be in our life for some good reason which He knows. We should get the victory over it by taking it to our heart, by receiving it as coming from Christ. No matter how it hurts us, if we accept it in this way it will leave benediction in our life. God sends some of our best blessings to us in our thorns, and it will be a sad thing if we thrust them away and miss them.

The pitiful weakness which St. Paul thrice besought the Lord to remove in order that he might continue his usefulness, Christ took, filled with His own strength and inspired with His own life until it blazed with transfigured beauty and became a resistless force in building up the kingdom of heaven in this world. Whatever our weakness may be, we need only to give it to Christ. He does not want our

strength—He cannot do anything with it. Some people are so good that Christ cannot use them. They are so wise that He has no place for them in His service. They know so much that He cannot teach them anything. They are so holy that He cannot make them any better. Let us beware of self-righteousness, the emptiest and most hopeless of all conditions. If we consider ourselves strong, good, wise, holy, and skilful in doing work, Christ does not want us. At least He does not want us in that mood. The first thing is to get emptied of all our own wisdom, strength, and ability for service, and then He can take us and do something with us. The truth is put well in these lines:

"If thou couldst empty all thyself of self,
Like to a shell dishabited;
There might He find thee on the ocean shelf,
And say, 'This is not dead,'
And fill thee with Himself instead.

"But thou art all replete with very thou,
And hast such shrewd activity,
That when He comes, He says, 'This is enow

Unto itself; 'twere better let it be;
It is so small and full, there is no room for Me.'"

There are many who are so full of themselves that they have no room for Christ. If only they would become empty, empty of self, He would fill them with Himself, and then they would have untold power for good in the world. We want to be used by the Master, to have our faces shine with His indwelling love and to become blessings among men. Are we willing to pay the price? Are we willing to accept the thorn when it is given to us, and to endure it, that we may be kept humble, so that the Master can use us? We may safely trust Him with the enriching of our lives. He knows when pain is needful, when loss is the only way to gain, when suffering is necessary to hold us at His feet. He gives trouble in order to bless us in some way; and we shall always be losers when we chafe or reject our thorn.

More White than Black

" Oh, many are the things that are out in the years :
There are visions of joy, bright hopes and dark fears,
There are prophecies made which the future must hold
To swift, sure fulfilment, in measure untold.
There are gleamings of smiles and cloud mists of tears,
There are beautiful things far out in the years.

" There are beautiful things far out in the years,
There is light which the gloom of the present endears.
There are thoughts which the future to good deeds may change,
There is happiness there so blissful and strange.
Though the present for us hold but trials and tears,
There are beautiful things far out in the years."

CHAPTER FOURTH

More White than Black

A LITTLE story-poem tells of a shepherd-boy leading his sheep through a valley, when a stranger, meeting him, looked over his flock and said, "I see you have more white sheep than black." "Yes," answered the boy, "it is always so." It is always so with sheep. In every flock there are many more white ones than black. Then we may take a wider view, and we shall find that everywhere in life there is more white than black.

It is so in nature. There are some desert spots on the earth, but, on the other hand, we may think of the broad fertile fields which spread out everywhere. Much, too, of what we call desert is really rich in its possibilities of fertility and culture, needing only the bringing to it of the water from the moun-

tains overshadowing it to change it into garden beauty. Then even irreclaimable deserts have their compensations. They are not altogether useless. Sahara seems a blot on the face of the earth, but it makes Southern Europe what it is, with its semi-tropical climate and productions, while but for the desert it would be, in its long winters and its cold, like other countries at the same parallels. There is more white than black in nature.

It is so in the matter of human conditions. There are some afflicted people in every community. There are those who seem unfortunate in their circumstances. There are homes with sorrow in them, with empty chairs and vacant places, and with memorials of sore losses. There are sad hearts and lonely people in every community. But the number of sorrowing and grieving ones is far exceeded by the great multitude of those who are happy. There are more songs than wails. There is more laughter than weeping—more white than black.

There always are many sick, crippled, blind,

and suffering ones in any neighborhood. There are hospitals, always filled. Physicians are kept busy going their rounds. But the proportion of the sick and suffering to the well and strong is very small. For one home with its illness, there are many with bounding health. The great majority of people are well, active, and strong.

There are some cloudy or rainy days, but there are far more days of sunshine and blue skies. An ancient sun-dial bore this legend, "I register only the bright days." But there are people who take no note of any but dark days. They keep a weather record, but enter in it only the disagreeable features, the excessive heat or the excessive cold, the rain, the snow, the thunder-storm, the abnormal humidity, the drought. Every year must have its unpleasant days, but for every one of these it brings us many days of comfort and delight.

In every individual life, too, there is more white than black. Some people are unwilling to confess that it is so with them. They seem

unhappy if they have nothing to speak of that makes appeal for sympathy. They are never heard saying in genuine gladness that they are perfectly well. They must always tell you of some ailment, some suffering, some drawback. They are pessimistic concerning their own lives. They magnify their troubles. They think that the evil days are more in number than the good, that there is more cloud than blue sky in their lives, that they have more sorrow than joy. But this is never true. The list of mercies in any life, if footed up through the years, would make a measureless total, while the sad and painful things would make an almost inappreciable list.

One tells of keeping a two-column account—on one side all the trials, losses, disappointments, sufferings; on the other, all the joys, benefits, favors, pleasures, mercies, kindnesses; and the bright column grew until there was no room to set down the items, while in the dark column there were but a few painful things noted. It is always so. There is more white than black.

Even our few dark days have their mission and bring their blessing. All sunshine would be the bane of the fields. If no clouds ever gathered, if it never rained, what would become of the trees, the grasses, the growing grain? Nature is glad of rain. If there were no cloudy days in our experience, if no showers ever fell, our lives would not reach their best. The dark days come to us on friendly errands.

We must not think we are losing time when we are called apart from activity to rest shut up in a sick-room. Work is not the only way of pleasing God. Activity is not the only duty of our lives in this world. We have lessons to learn, as well as things to do. Some day we shall learn that many of our best days have been the days we thought we were losing ground—idle, wasted days. But the day that has shadow or pain or sorrow in it may have more of heaven in it than any day that is cloudless, full of joy and pleasure.

"*There was never a day so misty and gray*
That the blue was not somewhere above it;

There is never a mountain-top ever so bleak
That some little flower does not love it.

"There was never a night so dreary and dark
That the stars were not somewhere shining;
There is never a cloud so heavy and black
That it has not a silver lining.

"Into every life some shadows will fall,
But heaven sends the sunshine of love;
Through the rifts in the clouds we may, if we will,
See the beautiful blue above."

Some of us train ourselves to see only certain things to the exclusion of other things. Thus we each make our own world, and two persons looking out from the same window see altogether different worlds. One looks through his little pane of glass and sees only mud, and another looks out and sees blue sky and shining stars. The trouble with too many people is that one little spot of darkness bulks so in their vision that it hides a whole heavenful of light and a whole earthful of beauty. One sorrow blots out the memory of a thousand joys. One disappointment makes them forget years

of fulfilled hopes. Many people have a strangely perverted faculty of exaggerating their mole-hills of trouble into mountains, and then of looking at their blessings through diminishing lenses. A cheerful heart always finds brightness, while an unhappy spirit sees nothing but discouragement in even the most favorable conditions. One person is happy in the narrowest circumstances, while another is wretched in a luxuriant home with every want supplied.

Some people never see anything to be thankful for. They may attend a service of praise on Thanksgiving Day, but they are not in a joyful mood, and not the first strain of thanksgiving rises from their hearts. They never stop complaining long enough to allow a grateful thought to nest in their hearts. They keep themselves always in such a mood of discontent that no note of praise is ever heard from their lips. One would think, to hear them talk about their trials, that God does not love them and that no favor ever comes into their lives. Yet, really, they do not

have any more than their share of human suffering, while they certainly have a full portion of blessing and good.

But this is not the way for a Christian to live. We dishonor God when we indulge in unhappiness and refuse to be grateful. We spoil our own lives and make existence wretched for ourselves when we insist on seeing only the black. Then we make it harder for others to live, casting the burden of our gloom upon them. We should train ourselves just as carefully and conscientiously to be thankful and songful as we do to be truthful, honest, kind, or thoughtful.

Some people try to excuse their unhappiness by saying that they were made that way and cannot change their disposition. They were not born with a sunny temperament, as some of their friends were. They are naturally predisposed to gloom and depression. But, even if this be true, it does not doom them forever to gloom and depression. The best Christian gladness is conquered sadness. Christ is able to make us over again, giving us new hearts,

and the new hearts He makes are all songful hearts, full of rejoicing and gladness.

We all have our special days, when we go up to the hill-top, out of our low valleys, and get a wider vision. It is well to have such a day even occasionally, but it would be better if we should live on the hills all the while. Some people stay always down amid the mists and never get to see a mountain-top. They never behold the sun. They never breathe the atmosphere of heaven. A little dog, one chill autumn day, was seen to get up from where he was lying in a dark corner of a room, and go and lie down in a patch of sunshine which he saw on the floor. The dog teaches us a good lesson. There are always bright spots in even the darkest experience, and we should find them and live much in them.

"Is it always foggy here?" asked a passenger of the captain of a steamer off the banks of Newfoundland, as the vessel ran through the great clouds of mist. "How should I know, madam? I don't live here." Yet there are too many Christians who seem

to live always in the fog-banks of fear and unbelief. Then they wonder why they do not have the joy of the Lord. But the joy of the Lord never is found in such climates. We must dwell in the uplands of God if we would know the secret of God's gladness.

The Master and the Doubter

"I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home, with broken masts and sails;
I will believe the Hand which never fails,
From seeming evil worketh good to me;
And though I weep because those sails are tattered,
Still will I cry, while my best hopes are shattered,
'I trust in thee.'

"I will not doubt, though sorrows fall like rain,
And troubles swarm like bees about to hive;
I will believe the heights for which I strive
Are only reached through anguish and through pain;
And though I groan and writhe beneath my crosses,
I yet shall see through my severest losses
The greatest gain."

CHAPTER FIFTH

The Master and the Doubter

NO other loss possible to a human life is so deep, so poignant, so desolating, as the losing of the sight of God's face in the darkness, the fading out of belief in the unseen world, in the divine Fatherhood, in the eternal goodness, in the immortal life. One of the strangest experiences in the story of John the Baptist was his doubt of the Messiahship of Jesus. There are many good men who in certain experiences have like questionings. Again and again, after great sorrow, Christian people are found doubting. In some cases the doubt takes this form: "Surely God is not the God of love I have been taught that He is, or He would not have darkened my life as He is doing." In other cases the feeling voices itself thus: "God must be punishing me for sins I have com-

mitted; or He is displeased with me for my failures and neglects in duty." Or, the person feels that God Himself has failed in His promises. "I have cried to Him, but He is silent to me. He does not regard my distress. He has no pity upon me. He has altogether forgotten me"

We are taught that the note of joy never should cease to be heard in the Christian's life, that we should praise God at all times, that we should rejoice evermore. That is, indeed, the way our Master would have us live. He has overcome the world and would have us share His victory. Yet there are times in the lives of many saintly believers when from some cause or other the Father's face is hid for a season. We do not forget that even Jesus Himself, in the terrible darkness of His cross, lost, for some moments at least, His consciousness of the divine presence, and cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" One writer says he wishes the evangelist had forgotten to put down this cry of Jesus on His cross. But we may be glad that he did

not forget it, for if ever we have such an experience we know now that it is not a mark of desertion, since even Jesus once felt the same.

"He said, 'Forsaken.' Then doubt is not sin.
'Tis but to stand in the night, and within
Feel, for a while, as if day could not win."

John did just the right thing with his doubt. He did not nurse it in his breast, and brood over it in his dungeon. If he had, his faith would have died out and the bitterness of disappointment would have overwhelmed him. That is the mistake some people make with their doubts and questionings. They cherish them, and the doubts grow into black clouds that quench every star. What John did was to take his question at once to the Master. He did not want to doubt; he wanted explanation, that he might continue to believe. The only true thing for one who has doubts is to go right to Christ Himself with them. Faith is not lost—only there are things which cannot be understood. These the Master will make plain.

It is profitable to learn how Jesus dealt with His friend's doubt. He did not work a miracle and bring him out of his dungeon. When we are distressed by the ways of God with us and begin to think that He is not dealing with us in love, and then cry to Him, "Art Thou, indeed, our Friend, our Redeemer? Is this love, this strange way by which Thou art taking us?" He may not change His treatment of us; the pain may become no less poignant, the sorrow no less bitter. This may not be His way of blessing us.

"Not what God gives, but what He takes,
Uplifts us to the holiest height;
On truth's rough crag life's current breaks
To diamond light."

John was suffering in prison for faithfulness to his Master and to truth. We would say that Jesus would have sent him a message of sympathy in his suffering. There is great power in even a word of encouragement when one is carrying a heavy load, or passing through a fierce struggle, or when one is in danger of fainting and giving up. It would have seemed

like our Master if He had spoken to John's messengers some approving words about their master, which they might have reported to him when they went back to Machærus.

After they had gone, Jesus did speak to His own disciples and the people such words. He said that they must not think of John as a reed shaken by the wind, as a man whom softness and luxury had spoiled. Of all men that had been born, there was none greater than John. Would it not have made John in his prison braver and stronger to endure his confinement if his disciples had returned, saying, "Jesus spoke most approvingly of you and of your work. He said this and this and this about you"? But there was not a word of such praise, not a word expressing sympathy with the caged lion in his chains within his bars. Jesus knew best how to deal with His friend. Perhaps a gentle message would have unmanned the noble hero. Perhaps commendation would have made him less able to endure the solitude of his dungeon. Our Lord wants to make us brave

and strong. He does not pamper us. Some people live on compliments and flatteries. They have become so used to being praised for everything they do, that if praise is not given them they fret and repine. They are like children who have been rewarded so often for being good, for getting their lessons, for doing home tasks, and for keeping sweet, that if the reward is not given they sulk and do nothing they should do. Reward is sweet, but to work only for commendation is one of the lowest forms of selfishness.

There are some people who want always to be sympathized with, and who are hurt when a friend fails to say at every complaint they utter, "I am very sorry for you." No mood of life is more unwholesome than this craving. It indicates pitiable weakness, selfishness of a most unmanly kind. We do others great harm when we humor such demands in them. We should seek to make our friends more self-reliant, instead of indulging their infirmities and fears. There is a time for sympathy, but sympathy must never be enervating. If

one comes to you in your sorrow, he must leave you more able to endure your sorrow, not with self-pity in your heart. The effect of too much that is called comforting is to make the grief seem greater and the heart less able to bear its load. But not thus did Jesus comfort John. The effect of the message He sent was to quiet and reassure him, to give him new confidence, and then enable him to continue in his prison courageously and victoriously to the end. Jesus wanted John to believe in Him without any concession to John's wishes, without a word of praise or sympathy. He did not make it a whit easier for John to believe. He treated him as a hero, and a hero John proved.

Jesus answered John's question by continuing in His work of mercy. The people were thronging about Him as they always were, bringing their sick, their blind, their lame, their lepers; and all who were brought to Him He healed. Then after the messengers had been watching the gracious work for a time, Jesus said to them, "Go and tell John

the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." This was the answer to John's question, "Art Thou the Messiah?"

When to-day the questions are asked, "What are the real evidences of Christianity? What are the highest proofs that Jesus Christ was the Son of God?" the answer may be made in the very words which the Master spoke to John's messengers. The strongest proof that Christianity is divine is in what it has done and is doing for the world. Does anyone doubt that Jesus was God's Messiah? Show him what the name of Jesus has wrought. Every sweet home in Christian lands is an evidence of Christianity. Every hospital, every asylum, every institution of charity, every orphanage, every school for feeble-minded children, every home for the blind, is an evidence that He who came was indeed God's Anointed One.

There are three things about doubting of which we may be sure. One is, that our Master is very patient with us when we find it hard to believe. It is not always so with our human friends. Some of them are impatient with any question implying uncertainty of belief. There are good men who resent even the most honest doubt in others as if it were a grievous sin. But Jesus will never treat our difficulties in believing in this way. We may tell Him just what it is we cannot understand and why we cannot quite believe, and He will listen to us patiently, explain the hard things and teach us faith. We may never be afraid to bring to Him any doubt or question that perplexes us.

Another thing to remember is that while Jesus is very patient with honest doubt, and deals with us gently, yet we rob ourselves of untold joy and blessing when we give way to questionings. Doubts are clouds in the sky which hide the blue and shut out the stars. Faith is infinitely better than doubt. It shows us the glory of heaven; it greatly enriches

all human blessings; it makes life a song and a triumph.

This, too, we should not forget, that doubt never is necessary. It was not necessary in John's case. Nothing was going wrong with the Messiahship of Jesus. Nothing was really going wrong with John's own circumstances. They were very hard, it is true, but John was fulfilling his mission. If he could have seen all things as they appeared from God's throne, his doubt would have become joyous faith. There are painful things in every life, some time, somewhere. We see only one side of the experience; or we read the serial story only part way through, not waiting for the final chapters, and at some dark point we begin to doubt God's goodness and love. We need only to wait a little longer, and we shall see the beauty. Here is where faith wins its victory. Faith has such confidence in the power, the wisdom, and the love of God, that no matter how things seem, it trusts and sings. We should seek to lose all our doubts in the joy of believing.

"It is Well"

We go
Nearer, nearer to the setting sun, and know
But this, whatever is, is best—
Sweetest of words confessed
By love's warm breath
In life or death.
We go
Led by His shielding hand and know
He will not make,
Except for love's sweet sake,
A single day
Shadowed along life's bitter way.
When it is night
We rest in this—He leadeth toward the light.

—George Klingle.

CHAPTER SIXTH

"It is Well"

HERE is no experience in life in which it is not possible for a Christian to say, "It is well." One ground for this confidence is that this is God's world. Nothing ever gets beyond the sweep of His power. What is true of material things is true also of events, of affairs, even of men's cruelty and hate. God rules in all. Pilate said to Jesus that he had power to crucify Him and power to release Him. Jesus replied, "Thou wouldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above." God could have rescued His Son from Pilate's hand that day if He had chosen to do so. That He did not do it was no evidence that He did not love Him. God could free us from all that would pain us, if He would. The trouble that breaks into your life is not an accidental oc-

currence, something that has escaped from the divine control, something from which God could not have delivered you. There is no lawlessness in this universe where God is sovereign. Whatever is done, He is the doer of it, or He permits it.

A further ground of confidence is that this God, in Whose hands are all things, is our Father. If He were a cruel God, if He did not love His creatures, we would have no assurance that we shall be kept from harm amid all the strange experiences of human life. But, being our Father, we know that the least and the lowliest of us are always thought about and have a special place in God's plan and purpose.

Not only does God love us and wish our good, but His wisdom is infinite. He knows what is best for us, what kind of experience will do us the good we need. We ourselves do not know. The things we think would bring us blessing, perhaps would bring us irreparable harm. The things we dread as evil, and shrink from, perhaps are the bearers to us of divin-

est good. We would make pitiful work of our lives if we had the ordering of our affairs and experiences in our own hands. If for but one day we could take matters into our own hands, out of God's hands, we would wreck everything.

It seemed cruel in God to let the sons of Jacob sell the boy Joseph away into a foreign land as a slave. Could not He have interfered and prevented the crime? Certainly. Did He not hear the lad's cries? Yes, He heard—and did nothing, but let him be carried off. How can we reconcile such permission of wrong against a helpless boy with the creed of Christendom that "God is love"? Indeed, it was just because He loved the boy that He let him be carried away. We have only to read on to the end of the story to learn this. We see at length in the outcome the most beautiful divine goodness and wisdom. We see the love working in this one story of Providence that is written out for us. It may not be written out so plainly in the experiences of our own and our friends' lives, but this really is the story of

all the strange things of life. God is willing to let us suffer to-day, that we may get some great, rich good, or do some noble service for the world, to-morrow.

With these truths about God and His dealings with us fixed in our minds, it is easy for us to believe that whatever our experience may be, it is well with us. We may not see the good with our own eyes, but God sees it, and that is enough. Even when we have brought the trouble upon ourselves by our disobedience of the divine laws, we may so relate ourselves to our sin as to be able to say, "It is well." There is in the mercy of God and in the redemption of Jesus Christ a wondrous power that can even take the bitterness out of sin and rob it of its curse. We may never do evil that good may come—that would be to mock God and act presumptuously. But when we have sinned we may take our sin to God and ask Him to forgive it, and then to arrest its poison in our life and change it to good.

We should understand well how to deal with our sins, when in weakness or temptation we

have done evil. If we keep them, hide them, and then go on, leaving them behind us, they will be our eternal undoing. Or if we try in any way of our own to set right that which our sin has made wrong, we shall find that the blight and curse remain. No such dealing with our sin can bring good out of it. But if we bring it to Christ, our Redeemer, and put it altogether into His hands—that is what it is to confess our sin and repent of it —He will take it and forgive it, and bring out of it benefit and good. That is the way the Master does with every sin that is truly confessed and given to Him. Not only is it then forgiven, but its repetition is made impossible, for the evil within which caused the sinful act is changed to good, and where the ugly thorn-root grew with such baleful fruit, will spring up now a lovely flower instead. That is what redemption means. That is the way Christ saves us from our sins—not from their penalty, merely, which really would not be a saving at all, but from the very sin-roots themselves.

So there is a blessed sense in which we may say, even after sinning, "It is well." We may never say it of the sin, or of our own hearts while cherishing the sin; but we may say it when the scarlet has become white as snow, when the crimson red has become as wool. David's sin was black and terrible, but the blessing of forgiveness wrought in David thereafter the noblest things of all his life. Peter's sin against his Master was pitiful in its shame, but Peter came a new man out of that night. The memory of his fall, instead of working sorrow and despair in him, wrought intenser earnestness in his Master's service.

"Noble souls, through dust and heat,
Rise from disaster and defeat
The stronger;
And, conscious still of the divine
Within them, lie on earth supine
No longer."

Some time or other everyone must experience bereavement. Evermore the circles of love are being broken. How can we say when a loved one is taken away, "It is well"? How can it

be well when we have lost out of our life all the wealth of a gentle and holy affection? But there is a beatitude even for mourning—they are blessed who mourn. The reason given is that they shall be comforted. This does not mean that the lost one shall be restored, but that God will put such peace, such strength, so much of His own love, into the bereft heart that the sorrow will be changed into joy. The story of many a bereavement is a story of restored joy. Those who were taken out of our sight are not really taken from us—they stay with us in memory, in love, whose clasp death cannot break, and in the benediction of their sweet lives, which abides unto the end. Those who never have mourned have missed the deepest blessing of the divine love.

"Two flowers within the garden of my days
Were set by God. Beneath the summer noon
One drooped and died, fading away too soon,
Ere it reached seed-time and fulfilled its praise.
The other yet within my garden stays,
Wafting sweet fragrance to the quiet moon,
Cheering my soul, that once was faint to swoon,
With the calm peace of its sustaining gaze.

Of these two flowers I have made a song—
The one that drooped in memory still abides;
The one that blooms I wear upon my heart;
And I have learned, from having lived so long,
That God intends the most when most he chides,
And waits to comfort till the tear-drops start."

It seems to us that suffering and loss must always be evil, that they never can bring good. We cannot see how it can be good for us to lose property, to be sick, to endure pain. But it is a law of life that the higher can be reached only through the sacrifice of the lower. There are those who can be saved for spiritual things only through the losing of all that seems desirable in the earthly life.

A distinguished musician ordered a violin from a maker of violins—the best he could make. At length he came for his instrument. He began to draw the bow across the strings, and his face clouded. He was disappointed. He broke the violin to pieces on the table, paid the price, and went away angry. The maker gathered up the fragments of the shattered instrument and carefully put them

together. Again the musician came, and taking his bow, drew it over the strings, and now the tone was perfect. He was pleased. "What is the price?" he asked. "Nothing," the maker replied. "This is the violin you broke to pieces on my table. I put the fragments together and this is the instrument on which you now make such noble music."

God can take the broken fragments of a life, shattered by sorrow or by sin, and out of them make a new life whose music shall thrill many hearts. If one is discouraged, if the life seems to be hopelessly broken, the gospel of divine love brings encouragement. There are no ruins of life out of which God cannot build beauty and blessing.

This is our Father's world. He loves us and is watching over our lives. This is the world in which Christ died to save us. Only our own hands can defeat the blessed purpose of God's love. Only our unbelief can turn the divine good into evil for us. We need never be defeated, we need never fail. Whatever our sorrow, our discouragement, our hurt, our fail-

ure, there is no day when we may not look into the face of Christ and say, "It is well." This is the meaning of the love of God to us. This is the full and final blessing of Christ's redemption—victory over all hurt, over all sorrow, over all pain. We need only to cleave to Christ in every time of fear or danger, and He will bring us through to glory.

"Living
Is but the bearing, the enduring,
The clashing of the hammer; the cutting,
The straining of the strings,
The growth of harmony's pure wings.
Life is the tuning-time, complete
Alone when every chord is sweet
Through sacrifice. No untried string
Can music bring:
No untried life
Has triumphed, having passed the strife.
True living
Is learning all about the giving."

The Joy of the Cross

"That evening, when the Carpenter swept out
The fragrant shavings from the workshop floor,
And placed the tools in order, and shut to
And barred for the last time the humble door,
And, going on His way to save the world,
Turned from the laborer's lot forever more,
I wonder—was He glad?

"That morning, when the Carpenter walked forth
From Joseph's doorway, in the glimmering light,
And bade His holy mother long farewell,
And, through the rose-shot skies with dawning bright,
Saw glooming the dark shadows of the cross,
Yet, seeing, set His feet toward Calvary's height,
I wonder—was He sad?

"Ah, when the Carpenter went on His way,
He thought not for Himself of good or ill;
One was His path, through shop or thronging men
Craving His help, e'en to the cross-crowned hill,
In toiling, healing, teaching, suffering, all
His joy, His life, to do the Father's will;
And earth and heaven are glad."

—S. Alice Raulett.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

The Joy of the Cross

E are not accustomed to associate joy with the experiences of the cross. Every item in the story of the terrible hours when Jesus was in the hands of His enemies, tells of suffering. Yet there is no doubt that there was joy in the Redeemer's heart in the midst of all His anguish. One New Testament writer tells us that for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising shame. In one sense, Christ's enduring of the cross includes His whole life. It seems certain, at least, that from the beginning of His public ministry He was aware of the manner of His death. When in His village home in Nazareth He heard the call to go out to begin His Messianic work, He knew to what He was going.

It is easy to find hints of joy in the story as

He moved toward the cross. It may seem strange to look at the seven words on the cross to find hints of joy, and yet more than one of these has its note of gladness. The saddest of them all was that uttered in the darkness, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was a mysterious cry. In the bitterness of His sufferings His Father's face was obscured for a time. Yet in the words "My God" we have a suggestion of joy. Though He could not see His Father's face, His faith did not fail. God was His and He was God's, and in His direst sorrow He spoke this word of confidence.

Another of the seven words was, "It is finished." This certainly has in it a note of joy. It was not a cry of despair, but a shout of victory. A work had been given Him to do, and now it was finished. The word told of the gladness which filled His heart as He came to the end. Great was His relief that His sorrow was now over. Great was His gladness that He had not failed in doing what had been given Him to do. He knew that His life was

not a failure, that He was not dying too soon, that an everlasting kingdom would be established through His sacrifice and death, that His influence would fill the world, that His very cross would draw all men unto Him.

It was the joy set before Him that enabled Him to pass through the experiences of death in triumph. Just beyond the cross He saw glory for Himself. St. John puts it thus in one of his great words referring to the death of Christ: "Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father." He does not say, "Knowing that His hour was come when He should go to His cross," but, "when He should depart unto the Father." His eye and heart did not rest on the way of His going, close before Him, but upon His destination. He was going back to His Father. He was going to His coronation as King of glory.

This was one of the secrets of the joy which sustained Christ in those hours. Another was in the knowledge that countless lives would

be saved through His sufferings and death. One of Doré's pictures represents Jesus on His cross. Stretching away into the dim distance is seen a vast multitude of people of all ranks—kings, nobles, peasants, men, women, children, a company which no man could number. On every face falls a light from the cross. There is no doubt that some such vision as this was before the eyes of Jesus Himself when He hung on the cross. He saw before Him all the blessed and glorious results of His great sacrifice. He knew that multitudes in all ages—ages past and ages to come—should reach the blessed life because of His offering of Himself on the cross. This was one element of the joy set before Him which enabled Him to endure the cross with triumph in His heart.

Jesus is not only our Saviour, but also our example. He would have us endure our cross as He endured His. The great central meaning of the cross is suffering for others. No one ever can lay down his life for others in the same wonderful way that Jesus did. Yet

everyone who follows Him must lay down his life vicariously, in his own measure. The death on the cross was the token of Christ's vicarious suffering. He lived and bore the cross for others every day that He lived. He loved perfectly, and love always gives itself. Love in us must be the same that it was in Christ. He exhorts His followers to love one another, even as He loved His disciples. St. John says that "because He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." We shall not likely have to do this literally. Now and then one falls at his post in doing the duty of love for another. Sometimes physicians and nurses give their lives for their patients. Ofttimes a mother gives her life for her child. But there are many ways of laying down one's life for others besides dying for them. Usually our duty is to live for others—not to die for them. This means to forget ourselves utterly, never to hold ourselves back from any service or sacrifice to which love calls us.

A beautiful story is told about the Agassiz

brothers. Their home was in Switzerland, on the shore of a lake. One winter day the father was on the other side of the lake from the home, and the boys wanted to join him. The lake was covered with thick ice. The mother watched the boys from her window as they set out. They got on well until they came to a wide crack in the ice. Then they stopped, and the mother became very anxious, fearing they might be drowned. The older boy got over easily, but the little fellow was afraid to jump. Then, as the mother looked, she saw Louis, the older brother, get down on his face, his body stretched over the crack, making a bridge of himself, and then she saw his little brother creep over on him.

This story is a beautiful parable of love. We should be willing to make bridges of ourselves on which others may pass over the chasms and the streams that hinder them in their way. We have many opportunities of doing this in helping our brothers over hard places, out of temptation, through sickness, to positions, or over into some better way of living. It is not

pleasant to lie down on the ice or in the wet and let another use us as a bridge. But Christ did it. His cross was just the laying of His own blessed life over the awful chasm of death and despair that we might pass over on Him into joy and hope and heaven. He endured the cross, despising shame, that He might save us. We cannot call ourselves Christians if we balk or falter or hesitate in responding to calls to endure suffering, loss, or shame in order to help others. "He that saveth his life shall lose it."

Life is not easy for any of us. It may be easy to live without self-denial, to live to please ourselves. Many people have no higher thought of life than this. They like to have friends, but they never think of being a friend when it means inconvenience, trouble, or cost to themselves; when it requires sacrifice, the giving up of comfort, ease, or pleasure, to help another. They call themselves Christians, but they never think of doing anything that requires discomfort, self-denial. There is no teaching of the Master which by

any possibility can be made to put the stamp of Christian on such living as this.

There is a legend of a monk to whose cell-door there came one night one in lordly mien, wearing rich dress, his hands sparkling with jewels, his whole appearance betokening luxury. "Who art thou?" asked the monk, as he opened the door. "I am Christ," was the answer in a tone which did not suggest the meek and lowly One. The monk scanned his visitor severely for a moment, and then asked, "Where is the print of the nails?" The impostor blanched before the question and fled. Everything that is truly of Christ bears the print of the nails. Where this sign is not found, whether it be in a life, in a creed, in a character, or even in a church, we have a right to say, "This is not of Christ."

Not only did Jesus bear the cross Himself, bowing under its burden and submitting to have His body nailed upon it, but He tells us that if any man will follow Him, he, also, must bear the cross. And this does not mean merely that we are to share Christ's cross—

that is, trust in it for salvation, hide beneath its shadow for refuge; it means that we are to bear our own cross; that is, the principle for which the cross stands must be the law of our life. The cross means voluntary surrender to the will of God. It means death to selfishness, and joyful acceptance of all duty. It means the giving up of one's life, all one's dreams of pleasure or profit or ease, whenever the Master calls for service.

Not only must the cross be endured, but it must be endured cheerfully. Some people always chafe and fret when they are called to do any hard or disagreeable duty. Perhaps they do it, but they do it in a way which robs the act of all beauty. Jesus endured His cross with joy, and that is the way He would have us do with our cross. We must not fret when the way is rough, when the task is disagreeable. We must not murmur when we are called to suffer, to endure loss, to pass through sorrow. We are to bear our cross joyfully.

There come experiences in many lives when it is not easy to do this, the load is so heavy. It

seems we cannot go farther, but must sink under our burdens. But Jesus deals very gently with those who find the cross heavy. He sympathizes, for He knows what it means to suffer. He sank under His own cross and had to be helped with it by a passer-by on the way to Calvary. He understands when we sink beneath our cross. A sonnet, "Via Dolorosa," has its comfort for those whose load is very heavy.

"'Daughter, take up thy cross, and follow Me.'
'I hear, O Master, and would follow still,
Did not my frame, grown weaker than my will,
Because my long-borne cross weighs heavily,
Most helpless sink when I would most obey;
But Thou that in Gethsemane didst pray
The cup might pass, if such His will might be,
Till Thou wast over-worn by agony,
And so didst sink exhausted on the way
To Calvary, till they raised the cross from Thee—
Thou wilt not chide if for a while at length
Weakened by anxious vigil, wrestling, loss,
Sinking, and finding none to raise my cross,
I lie where fallen, and wait returning strength.'"

The Quest of Happiness

This is peace:
To conquer love of self and lust of life;
To tear deep-rooted passion from the breast;
To still the inward strife;
To lay up lasting treasure
Of perfect service rendered, duties done
In charity, soft speech and stainless days:
These riches shall not fade away in life,
Nor any death dispraise.

—Sir Edwin Arnold.

Perish dark memories!
There's light ahead;
This world's for the living,
Not for the dead.

Down the great currents
Let the boat swing;
There was never winter
But brought the spring!

—Edward Rowland Sill.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

The Quest of Happiness

VERYBODY wants to be happy. Yet there is an almost infinite diversity of opinion concerning what happiness is, and also concerning the way in which happiness is to be found. What gives one person the most complete, heart-filling satisfaction has no attraction whatever for another. A good man was telling his friends that he had never been happier in his life than he was on a certain evening recently, and he then described a religious service at which a little company of devout Christians met together, spending an hour in prayer, Bible-reading, hymn-singing, and spiritual conversation. There are many others to whom also this service would have given great delight and very deep joy. But there are those who would find no pleasure at all in such a meeting.

Persons are often heard speaking rapturously of their enjoyment of a certain amusement. "I never was so happy in my life," one says enthusiastically, referring to an hour of entertaining pleasure. Yet there are many excellent people who would not have found the smallest degree of enjoyment in the particular amusement which so thoroughly satisfied this person. One's idea of happiness is entirely sensuous, while another finds pleasure only in intellectual enjoyment. A little girl is blissfully content with her doll, and a boy with his tin soldiers or his toy locomotive and train. Music has charms which captivate one person, while another, sitting alongside, experiences not one thrill of pleasure. Oliver Wendell Holmes said his conception of happiness was "four feet on the fender." So Cowper:

Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall.

Plato says, "Virtue is sufficient of herself for happiness." But there are those who think virtue exceedingly dull and devoid of power

to give happiness. Some find pleasure in a simple life, while others demand continual excitement.

Thus while the quest of happiness is universal, it is sought along a thousand different paths. It is well that we have a true conception of the happiness we wish to find before we set out on our search. There are several things that may be set down as settled regarding any happiness that is true and enduring.

One is that its secret is in the life itself, and not in the outer circumstances. Its source is within, not without. It does not depend on what we have, but on what we are. We cannot attain it, therefore, by merely bettering our earthly conditions. A man may prosper in his affairs, and his humble dwelling may grow into a stately mansion, his plain living into sumptuous faring, and his wooden chairs and threadbare carpets into the finest and most luxurious household furnishing. But he may be no happier in all his splendor of wealth than he was when he was a poor man.

We cannot attain happiness by merely improving our earthly condition. Building a new house for a discontented woman, filling it with all beautiful things, and supplying all that the woman craves, will not make her contented and happy. When a man is burning up with fever he asks to have the air of his room cooled. He wants the windows thrown open and begs to be fanned, thinking that thus he will find relief. He does not know that the fever is in himself and not in the temperature of his room. So it is that no changing of conditions will cure our trouble; it is in ourselves that the causes of happiness or unhappiness exist. If we are unhappy, we must look within for the secret. A busy woman went to her oculist, telling him that she must have her glasses changed. He made an examination and said to her that it was not new glasses her eyes needed, but rest. Many people think that if they only had a different set of circumstances their disquiet and unhappiness would vanish. But what they really need is rest, quiet within, the peace of God in their hearts. If the inner

fountains of our life flow full of joy, no matter what our external circumstances may be, nothing can disturb the gladness or hush the song. In seeking happiness, therefore, we must look to our own condition of heart and life and not to the new atmosphere in which we live.

Another thing about happiness is that we never can find it by seeking it directly, for itself. When you set out in the morning, saying that you are going to be happy that day, making that your first aim, you will miss what you seek. Such a quest is altogether selfish, and selfishness never yields anything beautiful or good. He who thinks of himself and lives for himself will never find happiness. It is only when in self-forgetfulness we strive to do good to others that our hearts find gladness. Happiness must be sought only as the fruit of a true and good life that produces it. It always eludes those who pursue it merely for its own sake, while it is found by those who walk in the paths of obedience and service.

Reward is promised to those who keep God's commandments and live a good and useful life, but he who puts the reward first in his living, thinking not of pleasing God and helping his fellow-men, but of winning a crown, will miss what he seeks. If we would obtain the reward, we must not live to obtain it, but to do our duty. Then the reward will come as the outcome of our faithfulness.

Another thing about happiness is that it is not found by him who thinks of receiving it only for himself. We must seek it for others as well as for ourselves. The man who prays only, "Lord, bless me," his thought and desire not going out beyond the narrow circle of his own life and his own interests and wants, will receive no answer. His prayer is selfish, and selfishness never gets the ear of God. The Lord's Prayer teaches us that in our petitions we are to include those about us, all our Father's family. We are taught to ask for bread, not for ourself alone, but for others. The petition is not, "Give me this day my daily bread," but, "Give us this day

our daily bread." We cannot pray even for the forgiveness of our own sins only, but must ask for the forgiveness of the sins of others in the same pleading.

"Remain not folded in thy pleasant joys,
Within the narrow circle of thy walls,
Content, if thine are blessed. Cold is thy fire,
If on thy hearthstone only; and thy bread
Bitter, which feeds alone thy selfish brood;
Thy house a prison, if it hold thy world,
Thy heaven a fiction."

The man who thinks only of his own happiness is violating the great law of love. We may not live as we please, regardless of the good or the comfort of others. We have no right to any personal enjoyment which would do harm or cause inconvenience or loss to another bound up with us in life's bundle. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." If the pleasure we are enjoying is giving pain to others about us, it is not rightly ours. Love always thinks of its neighbors. It seeketh not its own. It is thoughtful and self-forgetful. We can find true happiness only when we

think of the good of others, even before our own. It is not what we have ourselves alone that gives us joy, but what we are sharing with others and giving to others.

"If thou art blest,
Then let the sunshine of thy gladness rest
On the dark edges of each cloud that lies
Black in thy brother's skies.
If thou art sad
Still be thou in thy brother's gladness glad."

Another thing about true happiness is that we never can find it if we seek for it only on this earth. There is a happiness of this world which has its springs here, and there are thousands who look no higher in their quest. But there is no cant in saying that the pleasure which is only of this world, which leaves out God, Jesus Christ, the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the law of love, and heaven, is not the happiness which will finally satisfy any immortal soul. It does not reach high enough. It would not satisfy an angel. Then reason tells us that the happiness an immortal being should seek must itself be im-

mortal. Otherwise it will last only a little while along the way, while we stay in the present world. We cannot carry it with us into the other life. It is not enough to have an enjoyment which can make us glad only for such a little distance on the way, and will then fail us, leaving us to go all the other long, immortal miles without its light or cheer.

We can find abiding happiness only by letting God into our lives, by loving Him, trusting Him, and doing His will instead of our own, and by taking His way rather than our own way in life. We are made for God and can find true joy only in God and in His service. If we are Christ's, our real home is in heaven, and we cannot find in this world that which will meet our immortal cravings. We must drink of the streams that have their sources in heaven if we would find full and enduring happiness.

God wants us to be happy. He has put us in a world which is filled with beauty. He has provided for us countless sources of gladness,

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putting within our reach the joys of human friendship, the inspirations and comforts of home, and the blessings of divine grace. Even in the most painful circumstances He makes joy possible for us. If all earthly good should be taken from us, He brings us heaven's peace. If we only learn to do God's will day by day, without question, without reserve, cheerfully, we shall find the gladness we seek. Then our lives shall be songs and shall leave undying blessings in the world.

It is worth while to be a singing bird in this world in which there are so many harsh and discordant sounds and so many cries of pain. It is yet more worth while to be a singing Christian, giving out notes of gladness amid earth's sorrows. For many of us it is not easy to be always glad. But we should learn our lesson so well that whether amid circumstances of sorrow or of joy the song never shall be interrupted. Like the robin, we should train ourselves to sing even in the rain.

We shall have our sorrows, and they may be very bitter. We shall have to endure pain,

again and again, and it may be very hard to endure. We shall have our griefs and our losses, and ofttimes our hearts may seem to break. But through all these experiences the light of joy shall continue to shine within us, and our peace shall not be broken. The happiness God gives is part of the life of heaven, and in that home the light goeth not out by day and there is no night there.

"My neighbor's grief is dark to me.
I gaze and dread, without;
And marvel, how he lives to bear
The blackness, and the doubt.

"And yet, by all lost ways of grief
That I have had to plod,
I know how small a rift lets through
A little gleam of God."

Obedience that Pleases Christ

I said, "Let me walk in the fields,"
He said, "No; walk in the town."
I said, "There are no flowers there."
He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black;
There is nothing but noise and din."
And He wept as He sent me back—
"There is more," He said; "there is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,
And the fogs are veiling the sun."
He answered: "Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark, undone."

I said, "I shall miss the light;
And friends will miss me, they say."
He answered, "Choose to-night
If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, "Is it hard to decide?
It will not be hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide."

Then into His hand went mine;
And into my heart came He;
And I walk in a light divine
The path I had feared to see.

—George Macdonald.

CHAPTER NINTH

Obedience that Pleases Christ

IT is not enough to begin; the test of a true life is in its persistence unto the end. A good beginning is important. The trouble with many people is that they do not begin at all. They listen, ponder, dream, and resolve, but never take the first step. That is the way thousands of men, with splendid possibilities, fail to make anything of their life, miss their chance. Nothing is more important than promptness in doing the duty that comes to one's hand. Not to do it at the moment is to lose the opportunity of doing it at all.

But it is not enough to begin. The paths of life are marked at every step with unfinished work. It is persistence that alone wins the prizes. Jesus said to certain persons who had believed on Him, "If ye abide in My word,

then are ye truly My disciples." To abide in Christ's word is to be always faithful to it. The one great duty of discipleship is obedience. The word abide has the thought of home in it, and suggests also a willing and loving obedience, hearty, trustful, joyous. Jesus said of His own obedience, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Obedience was bread, life, to Him. We must abide in Christ's word. It may sometimes cost us a great deal to obey—it would be much easier to listen to the voice of ease or self-indulgence. But the question of ease or inclination must never be considered. The only question is: "What is the Master's plan for my life?"

The highest and noblest success possible to any life is its realization of the divine purpose for it. Whatever else we may do, whatever great thing, whatever praise we may win from men for our fine attainments and our splendid achievements, if we miss filling the place God made us to fill and doing the work God made us to do, we have missed the true

glory of our life. The most triumphant word anyone can say at the end of his life is, "I have accomplished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

It is most important, therefore, that we find the will of God for our life and accept it sweetly and gladly. There are those who are always at odds with their circumstances. The people they have to live with or work with are uncongenial and disagreeable. The conditions in which they find themselves are uncomfortable and distasteful. So they chafe and fret and are full of discontent. All this unhappiness could be cured if they would accept their circumstances and get their own spirit in proper accord with the will of God. When St. Paul could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content," he had found the secret of sweet and joyous living. You cannot change the people about you and make them agreeable to live with; but you can learn to keep sweet yourself, however irritating others may be. You may not have power to make your surroundings pleas-

ant and congenial, but you can bring your own mind and heart into such patience, such cheerfulness, such self-control, such peace, that in whatsoever state you are, you shall be content. As Browning puts it:

The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means; a very different thing.

Many people are unhappy because they cannot do the large and fine things which they see some other people doing. But we should remember that the things that God has given us to do, however small they may be, are really the greatest things we can possibly do. Self-surrender to God, though our fondest ambition is laid down, is in God's sight really the noblest thing we can do with our life. Because we cannot achieve the great things it is in our heart to do, our life need not therefore be a failure; the folding of our hands in trust and resignation may be a greater act

in God's sight and a greater benediction to the world than the finest work those hands might have done.

At least, if we would reach the highest and best possibilities of Christian discipleship, we must put ourselves in full harmony with the will of God for us. We must be content to let God use us how and where He will, and to do what He would have us do. Many people make almost nothing of their lives, do little that is worthy or beautiful, because they are not willing to do the plain, lowly things that are ever waiting close to their hands, but strive always to find conspicuous things to do so as to get praise of men. If you would leave behind you when you go away a beautiful story of good done, things which have made the air sweeter, and the world better and happier, do what the Master wants you to do. Christina Rossetti's little prayer to be used is very beautiful:

Use me, God, in Thy great harvest-field
Which stretcheth far and wide, like a wide sea.

The gatherers are so few, I fear the precious yield
Will suffer loss. O, find a place for me—

A place where best the strength I have will tell;
It may be one the other toilers shun;
Be it a wide or narrow place, 'tis well,
So that the work it holds be only done.

If we would make our discipleship what we should make it, we must keep self out of it. We cannot live for ourselves and live for Christ. Then we must also learn the lesson of love for others. Self-seeking is nowhere else so unseemly, so unlovely, as it is in Christian life and Christian work. Ruskin has a passage in which he portrays the self-seeker and tells of the outcome of his life: "So far as you desire to possess rather than give; so far as you look for power to command instead of to bless; so long as you seek position for self instead of for another; so long as you crave homage and have the desire to be greatest instead of a desire for self-effacement and to be least—just so long you are serving the lord of all that is last and least, and you

shall not win the crown laid up for the self-sacrificing, but you shall have death's crown, with the worm coiled within it, and death's wages, with the worm feeding on them."

It is a canon of art that only a good man can paint a great picture. A connoisseur of art, looking at a painting, said, "That man must have risen to great spiritual heights before he could have painted that figure of the Christ." His friend told him the story of the picture. Two boys, twins, chose art as their life-work. They toiled and struggled, keeping themselves from everything that would weaken either their physical or moral well-being. Some wealthy friends proposed to lionize them, but the boys declined all help, all patronizing. "We will not sell our manhood," they said to each other. "We will hew out our own paths." And they did, their hearts set meanwhile on a great work of art, the Christ, which they wished to produce. "We must live and work," they said, "that our ideal will be possible when we come to the fulness of our powers." At the age of forty-

eight one of the twins died, and after his first passion of grief the other said, "Now I must do my brother's work as well as my own."

"That painting," the friend continued, "is the culmination of the life-work of these two men. Do you wonder at its excellence?"

With Christian work it is still more true than with art work that only a good man can do it well. If we would reach the great possibilities of discipleship we must seek purity of motive, holiness of life, devotion to lofty ideals, and self-forgetfulness in striving for worthy ends. We must be good, if we would do good. We must realize the Christ in our own life before we can show others the glory and the beauty of the Christ.

Then if we would fulfil our discipleship we must concentrate all our energy and strength upon it. We must make it the first thing in our life to be Christians. That is what St. Paul meant of himself when he said, "To me to live is Christ," or when he said again, "This one thing I do—I press toward the goal." He did a great many things, but in

them all he was living Christ and reaching toward the goal of perfection. We can do this in the surest way by giving Christ our days one by one as they come.

"With every rising of the sun
Think of your life as just begun.

"The past has shrivelled and buried deep
All yesterdays. There let them sleep;

"Nor seek to summon back one ghost
Of that innumerable host.

"Concern yourself with but to-day,
Woo it, and teach it to obey

"Your will and wish. Since time began,
To-day has been the friend of man;

"But in his blindness and in his sorrow
He looks to yesterday and to-morrow.

"You and to-day! a soul sublime,
And the great pregnant hour of time,

"With God himself to bind the twain;
Go forth, I say; attain! attain!"

A business man when asked the secret of his success in doing things so well, replied, "I

do not know unless it be that whatever I am doing any moment, however small a thing it may seem to be, I bring all my mind and heart and strength to it." The poet bids us, if we write but one line, to make that sublime. Let us learn to bring all the strength of our life to the smallest details of our duty. Let us make the moments beautiful, and then the hours will be radiant and the days glorious.

Friendship with Christ

Oh, never is "Loved once"
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprizèd friend!
Thy cross and curse may rend,
But, having loved, thou lovest to the end.
This is man's saying—man's: too weak to move
One spherèd star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
By his No More and Once.

* * * * * * *

Say never, Ye loved once:
God is too near above, the grave beneath,
And all our moments breathe
Too quick in mysteries of life and death
For such a word. The eternities avenge
Affections light of range.
There comes no change to justify that change,
Whatever comes—Loved once!

—Mrs. Browning.

CHAPTER TENTH

Friendship with Christ

HE ideal Christian life is a personal friendship with Jesus Christ. Yet some persons have difficulty in understanding how a personal friendship can be formed with one they cannot see, whose voice they cannot hear, whose touch they cannot feel. But friendship with Christ is not dependent on sight or touch or hearing. He can make Himself known to our hearts in spiritual revealings. One saintly man said, "I know no other friend so well as I know Jesus Christ."

We may find much in human friendship that will make friendship with Christ plain to us. It is more than mere acquaintance. There are many who have superficial ideas about friendship. They will talk to you about their "hosts of friends." But no one can really have a host

of friends. A quaint minister used to say that he could fill the meeting-house with those who were friendly to him, but that the pulpit would hold all his friends. People tell you that this man and that one and the other are their friends. What they might say truthfully is that these men are their acquaintances. They meet them now and then in business or socially, and their relations are cordial and kindly. But that is not friendship. It may be something very beautiful, very charming, very inspiring and helpful. Friendliness has its blessings. Acquaintanceship has its cheer, its inspirations, its influence in our lives. But friendship is something far deeper. It knits lives together closely and indissolubly.

There are those who call themselves friends of Christ who likewise are little more than chance acquaintances. They know Him only in a superficial way. They are not bound to Him by any strong tie. They easily drift away from Him. That is not friendship. You do not want for your friend one who is with you to-day and off to-morrow. A friend is

one who loves and does not cease to love. Christ having loved, loved unto the end. His ideal of friendship was, once a friend, always a friend. "If the friendship ceases or breaks, it never was a friendship." Friendship with Christ should carry the whole heart and life with it, and nothing should ever weaken it or wear it out. Then it should be close, tender, intimate. It is not enough to have a mere distant acquaintance with Christ—He wants us to be His heart-friends. It is not enough to know a great deal about Christ—we must know Him by personal knowledge.

One quality of true friendship is trust. Not only do you love to be with your friend, but in his presence you have no fear. You do not have to be on your guard when with him, lest you say a word too much or too little. You have no fear that he will misunderstand you. Out in the world you have to be most careful always, for sometimes those about you are watching to see something to criticise in you or to use against you. The enemies of Jesus watched Him to discover something with

which to accuse Him. But there was none of this atmosphere of suspicion about Him when He went into the home of Martha and Mary. The moment He entered that door He was safe. He did not need then to be on His guard.

In one of Mrs. Craik's books is a sentence which gives an exquisite picture of this phase of friendship. "Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but only to pour them all right out just as they are—chaff and grain together—knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away!" What could be more sacred than this comfort of feeling safe with a person, absolutely safe? That is the kind of friend Jesus is. You may always feel safe with Him. You may confess all your sins to Him. You may tell Him all your faults and your failures—how you denied Him the other night, how you failed to be true to Him, and

all the bad thoughts of your heart; and He will be just as tender and gracious as if you never had sinned. He loves unto the end.

None of us would want to have our hearts photographed and the picture held up before the eyes of our neighbors. We would not want even our best friends to see a full transcript of our secret life—what goes on within us—the jealousies, the envyings, the bitter feelings, the stained thoughts, the meannesses, selfishnesses, and suspicions, the doubts and fears; yet Christ sees all this unworthy inner life, and loves us still. We need never be afraid to trust Him with the knowledge of the worst that is in us. We do not need to hide our weaknesses from Him. His friendship knows all and yet loves us better than it knows. He never withdraws His love.

That is Christ's side. We may trust Him absolutely and forever. But how about our friendship for Him? Can He trust us as absolutely? May He always be sure of finding us loyal and true wherever we are? When He has placed us anywhere, at any post, to do

any duty, may He know that He will find us there, whatever perils may sweep round us? Did you ever think that Christ trusts you and depends upon you? You trust Him and you know that He will never fail you. Not one of His words ever can pass away. You may lean upon Him in time of danger, and He will sustain you, hold you up. But do you ever think that He trusts you also? He gives you a duty, and He depends upon you to perform it. He sets you to be His witness at some point, and He expects you to be loyal, faithful, even unto death. He sends someone to be guarded by you, cared for, guided, protected. Are you always faithful to your trust?

A general blamed the defeat of his army, in a great battle, on one commander who failed to hold a certain point, as was expected of him. His failure compelled the whole army to retreat. Jesus sets each one of us to stay at a certain point to hold it for Him. Our failure may bring disaster to some great plan, may lead to the defeat of a whole division of

His army and the harming of His cause in a whole community. Christ trusts us and entrusts to us great interests and destinies. Let us never fail Him. We may always trust Him. But may He trust us always? Are His interests safe in our keeping?

"Keep me in step with Thee, dear Lord,
As upward day by day
The way of holiness I tread,
The new, the living way.

"Yes, keep me holy, cleansed, and filled,
Walking in step with Thee;
Kept for Thy use, and Thine alone,
Thine all the praise shall be."

Another quality in true friendship is readiness to serve. A friend keeps nothing back when there is need for help. A prize was offered for the best definition of a friend. Many persons competed, but the definition which was adjudged the best and to which the prize was awarded was, " A friend—the first person who comes in when the whole world has gone out." Some of us know the truth of this definition

by experience. There was a time when we needed a friend and one by one our acquaintances and those who called us friend, passed by and passed on and away—cold, unsympathetic, unheeding, leaving us to struggle alone with our burden, our need, or our responsibility. Then when all had gone out there came one, cheerful, brave, strong, unselfish, speaking the word or doing the deed which brought us relief, so that we could go on our way without failing.

It is such a friend that Christ is to us—when all the world has gone out and no one is ready to help, He comes in; when all human friends have failed us, He stands beside us, strong and faithful. Human love may be true, but at best its power is limited. It can go only one short mile with us, and then must fall out, fall behind, leaving us to go on alone. It has no wisdom to help beyond the merest borders of experience. We are powerless in the presence of any great human need. True friendship can do much. One wrote to a friend that he had never crossed the friend's thresh-

old with a grief but that he went away without it; had never come heart-hungry without being fed and having his sorrow comforted. Never had the friend's door been closed to him for even one little day. Yet there came a day when even that door was closed, when that friendship gave no help, no response, no consolation, no comfort. Human friendship is wondrously sweet, yet there come experiences when the truest, strongest human friend can do nothing. But when all the world has gone out, Christ will come in. He is an unfailing, an eternal Friend.

Here again, however, we must think of our side of this friendship. Christ is ready always to serve us, even to the uttermost. There is nothing He will not do for us in our time of need. But are we as ready to serve Him? Do we never drop out when the duty becomes hard, when the burden grows heavy, when danger is before us? It should be true of us that when all others fail Christ, we shall come in with our service, our self-sacrifice.

Sometimes the best proof of friendship is in

its asking hard things. In war the commander does not shield his friend from danger. There is a story of a great general who called for someone to lead a forlorn hope, when his own son volunteered. The old soldier's eyes lighted with love and pride. Handing the standard to his boy, he said, " There is your task. Yonder is the enemy. Go forward." One can conceive of love that would have withheld the boy from the splendid heroism because of the peril in it. But that would not have been soldierly love. The father was glad to encourage the bravery in his boy whatever the cost might be. The friendship of our Master does not restrain us from hard tasks, from costly sacrifices, and we must be as ready for these severer tests of friendship as for the easier ones. The more heroic the service to which we are called, the greater is the honor conferred upon us, and the more careful must we be not to fail or disappoint our Lord.

Another quality of true friendship is its longing for companionship, for fellowship, for communion. Many of us know the wretched-

ness which comes because of necessary separation from those who are dear to us. Helen Hunt Jackson writes of "Absence":

The shortest absence brings to every thought
Of those we love a solemn tenderness.
It is akin to death. Now we confess,
Seeing the loneliness their loss has brought,
That they were dearer far than we had taught
Ourselves to think. We see that nothing less
Than hope of their return could cheer or bless
Our weary days. We wonder how, for aught
Or all of fault in them, we could heed,
Or anger, with their loving presence near,
Or wound them by the smallest word or deed.

It grieves our Master to have us absent from Him. Yet do we never leave His side? We grieve Him if we drift away from Him. We please Him if we yield our whole life to Him in the perfect abandonment of love and trust. Then wherever we go, amid whatever struggles or temptations, or into whatever worldly experiences, we shall be kept at one with Him, His heart and ours knit together, His life and ours blending in one.

The Unrecognized Christ

"Oh, what is this pathway white, with parapets of light,
Whose slender links go up, go up, and meet in heaven high?
'Tis the Road of the Loving Heart from earth to sky.

"Who made the beautiful road? It was the Son of God,
Of Mary born in Bethlehem. He planned it first, and then
Up the Road of the Loving Heart He led all men.

"Was it not hard to build? Yes, all His years were filled
With labor, but He counted not the cost nor was afraid:
No Road of the Loving Heart is cheaply made."

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

The Unrecognized Christ

ONE of the most beautiful incidents of the Easter Day is the one that occurred at Emmaus. Two disciples were walking to their home in the country. On their way a stranger joined them and inquired the reason of their sadness. He talked with them and sought to comfort them. When they came to the end of their journey they begged the stranger to abide with them, as the day was far spent. As they sat down to their evening meal, they discovered that this stranger was Jesus Himself. He had walked with them all those miles unrecognized.

It is so with us continually. Christ is with us, but we do not recognize Him. The question is often asked, "If Christ should come to-day, what would people do?"

"If Christ should come to-day,
If we could find Him on the broad highway,
Or city street,
Oh, would we crowd to touch His garment's hem,
Or kiss His feet?"

We may leave off the "if," and say, "Christ has come; He is on the street with us; He is in the quiet room where we sit; He is with us in the thick of our business affairs; He is beside us in the darkness when we flatter ourselves that nobody sees or knows what we are doing."

There are two ways of thinking of this. One is, that we pass all our life in the presence of the living Christ and should never do anything, never speak a word, nor think a thought, nor cherish a feeling, of which we would be ashamed if we saw His holy eyes looking down into ours. The other thought is, that we are never left alone in any need, trouble, or danger. We do not have to call for Christ or send for Him, as Martha and Mary did, when their brother was sick, waiting for Him—one day, two days, four days,

until it seemed His coming at last was too late. He is always near, nearer than our dearest friend.

We think of Christ as in heaven, and so He is; but He is just as really on the earth as in heaven. A recent writer happily illustrates this by the sky. We look up at the sky and it seems far away, like a great blue arch or canopy, high above us. But where does the sky really begin? Not up in the air, above the hills and the mountains. It begins right beside us. Indeed, the sky is all about us. We walk in it. We sit down in it. We sleep in it. It is all about our house at night. We breathe the sky and draw nourishment for our life out of it. The rain comes out of the sky to refresh the earth and make it beautiful. This illustrates the nearness to us of the living Christ. We walk in Him. In Him we live and move and have our being. He is never so far off as even to be near—He is more than near. He wraps us round about continually with His blessed life. We breathe Christ if we are His friends.

It will be well if we train ourselves to think thus of Christ, as always as near to us as is the air surrounding us. We may think of Him as with us in our walks, at our business, in our home circles, in all the circumstances and experiences of our everydays.

A French painter has recently made a sensation in Paris by the manner of his work. He fitted up a cab for a studio and drove about the streets, stopping here and there to make sketches of places and things he saw. People did not see him shut up in his cab, looking out upon them through his little window and taking his pictures of the nooks and corners and by-ways of Parisian life. He thus caught all manner of scenes and incidents in the city's hidden ways. He then transferred his sketches to canvas and put Christ everywhere among them. When the people saw his work, they were startled, for they saw themselves in their everyday life, in all their follies and frivolities, and always Christ in the midst. Every kind of actual life is on the canvas, and in the heart of it all—the Christ.

Could there be a truer representation of the living Christ than this? There is no part of the whole life of any of us, whether good or bad, whether it be a holy scene of kindness, of helpfulness, of devotion, or a scene of frivolity or sin in which we would be ashamed to have ourselves caught and photographed—there is nothing in the life of any of our days or nights in which the Christ is not.

We attend church to see Christ, and that is well—He loves to meet us in worship. We go to His table, and our communion is close and sweet. We need more, not fewer, of these trysts with our Lord. But we should never forget that the living Christ is with us, not only in holy places and at sacred times, but just as really in life's commonest ways and at every moment.

The Emmaus disciples walked miles with the risen, living Christ that first Easter Day and did not recognize Him. Think what they missed. But think, also, what we miss continually because we do not recognize the Christ Who comes to us in our need or sorrow. There

is a picture of a mourner—a fisherman's widow—sitting on a bare rock looking out over the sea, into which her husband and sons have gone down in their fishing-boat. Her grief is so great that her face seems stony with despair. A little behind and above her is an angel, touching the strings of his harp. But the mourner is not moved by the music—does not even hear it. So it is that many people are unaware of the presence and love of Christ. Think what they miss. Think what we all miss. Not one of us always recognizes Christ when He comes to help us. If we knew who it is that comes and why He comes, and would take the blessing He brings to us, what victorious lives we should live!

The way Jesus revealed Himself to these Emmaus disciples is suggestive. It was at the evening meal, when He broke and blessed the bread, that in some way they discovered who He was. We are apt to think of Christ as coming to us only in unusual ways, whereas He really comes nearly always in familiar experiences. A disciple said to Jesus, "Lord,

show us the Father and it sufficeth us." The disciple expected to see a transfiguration, a theophany, some bright and dazzling display of divinity. Jesus answered him, "Have I been so long time with you and hast thou not known Me? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He had been showing the Father to His disciples for three years, in pure, sweet living, in radiant joy and peace, in kindness, in patience, in thoughtfulness, in comfort for sorrow, in mercy to the penitent, in feeding the hungry, and opening blind eyes. They had seen these beautiful ministries, but they had never thought of them as being revealings of God. Some people say now that if they only saw some miracles they would believe on Christ. They want Him to do startling things. They do not think that the divine kindnesses which come continually in providence can be revealings of God. But in nearly all cases it is thus that Christ makes Himself known to us—in familiar, common experiences, and not in startling or unusual ways.

Life is full of illustrations. A man left his home to seek for diamonds. He sold his little farm and sought far and near for precious stones, but found none. He came back in deep poverty and learned that the man who had bought his farm had found diamonds by his own doorstep and was immensely rich. An artist sought for fine clay with which to fashion a work of art that would give him fame. Far and near his quest led him, and he returned weary, worn, and old, to learn that his apprentice had made marvels of beauty out of the clay in the artist's own yard. The knight in "The Vision of Sir Launfal" went over all lands in search of the Holy Grail and found it, at last, when he came home, by his own gate. We do not need to go far to find Christ—He is always near to us. We do not need to seek Him in great deeds, in marvellous ways. There is more of the revealing of Christ in the common ways of life than in all the world's great ways. Seek for Him in the simple duties of the passing days, in doing the work of the present moment, in

showing love to those who have need of Christ.

"He hath no need of me in grand affairs,
Where fields are lost, or crowns won unawares.

"Yet, Master, if I may make one pale flower
Bloom brighter for Thy sake, through one short hour;

"If I, in harvest fields where strong ones reap,
May bind one golden sheaf for Love to keep;

"May speak one quiet word when all is still,
Helping some fainting heart to bear Thy will;

"Or sing one high, clear song on which may soar
Some glad soul heavenward, I ask no more."

In the Emmaus story Jesus vanished the moment the disciples recognized Him. "Their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight." How often it is true that only in their vanishing do our friends reveal themselves to us! They live with us for days and years and bless us in countless ways, bringing to us the best gifts of heaven, and yet, somehow, we do not see the

splendor of their lives or of their ministry until they are gone.

"In this dim world of crowded cares
We rarely know, till wildered eyes
See white wings lessening up the skies,
The angels with us unawares."

It is always so. We never know the best even of those we love most truly and appreciate most fully, until they are leaving us. Somehow our eyes are holden. Faults seem larger, and blemishes mar the picture more, and blots are blacker, in this world's light. But when the light of the other world falls upon our friends, our eyes are opened, and faults seem smaller and smaller, blemishes change into marks of loveliness, and blots turn white.

We should learn not to wait until they are leaving us before we begin to see our loved ones fairly, justly, truly, with love's eyes. Of course, they have their faults and make their mistakes, but faults and mistakes may be only the imperfections of unripeness, of immaturity. Shall we not pray for eyes of charity that shall not see the flecks and flaws,

but that shall see the beauty and the worth, that are to be?

"So many little faults we find:
We see them, for not blind
Is love; we see them, but if you and I
Perhaps remember them some by and by,
They will not be
Faults then—grave faults—to you and me,
But just odd ways, mistakes, or even less—
Remembrances to bless.
Days change so many things, yes, hours—
We see so differently in suns and showers;
Mistaken words to-night
May be so cherished by to-morrow's light.
We may be patient, for we know
There's such a little way to go."

Living up to Our Prayers

Thou, O Father, thoughtst it best
From my ken to take thy light;
Left me lying, without rest,
Staring, wide-eyed, into night.

By the lonely gloom of doubt
I am frightened, like a child
When the lamp is carried out
And he cries, unreconciled,

Till his soothing mother steals
To his side and comfort brings,
While across the dark he feels
For her hand and to it clings.

So I, Father, cry to Thee!
I ask not to understand—
Take the lamp; but come to me
Through the dark and hold my hand.

—Marian Warner Wildman.

CHAPTER TWELFTH

Living up to Our Prayers

PRAYER tests life. If we only tried seriously to live up to our praying we should often find a strange constraint upon our character and conduct. We pray to be made unselfish; if we demanded of ourselves all that this means, it probably would restrain many selfish impulses in us and radically affect our treatment of others. It would set us in new relations to all about us. It would check in us the crafty desire, so common among men, to get the better of others in all transactions. Someone writes:

"O God, that I might spend my life for others,
With no ends of my own;
That I might pour myself into my brothers,
And live for them alone."

What would happen in us, what change, what transformation, if this prayer were to be answered?

We pray to be made patient. If we are really sincere in this request we shall find ourselves halted many a time in our impetuous moods, our tongues silenced on the very edge of angry outbursts, and our harsh and bitter feelings softened by an irresistible contraint toward quietness and gentleness.

There is no prayer that most Christians make oftener than that they may be made like Christ. It is a most fitting prayer, and one that we should never cease to make. But if we very earnestly wish to be transformed into Christ's likeness, we will find the desire growing into great intensity in our daily lives, and transforming them. It will affect every phase of our behavior and conduct. It will hold before us continually the image of our Lord, and will keep ever in our vision a new standard of thought, of feeling, of desire, of act, and word. It will keep us asking all the while such questions as these, "How would Jesus feel

about this if He were personally in my circumstances? How would Jesus answer this question? What would Jesus do if He were here to-day where I am?"

Our Lord gives us some very definite instructions concerning praying and living. For example, He teaches us that if we would have our sins forgiven we must forgive others. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." There is no mistaking the meaning of this petition. Each time we pray to be forgiven we commit ourselves to an act, something we must voluntarily do, before we can hope to receive an answer—we pledge ourselves to be forgiving. If we are sincere when we offer this prayer, and if we think seriously of what we are saying, no bitterness can stay in our hearts, no resentful feeling, no grudge.

Yesterday someone wronged us, injured us, treated us unkindly, did something which stung us to the heart. Last night we looked back over our day, and it was blotted and stained. We asked God to forgive us these

evil things. He is very merciful, and loves to be gracious. But as we pray to be forgiven we promise something—we promise to forgive. If we would live up to our prayer we must give up our resentment, our bitterness, and must show the same mercy to others that we ask God to show to us.

The Master tells us very plainly, also, what we should do when in the divine presence we become conscious of any wrong we have committed. He is exhorting against anger in any form, and tells us in startling words that hatred, bitterness, and contempt of others are violations of the sixth commandment. Then He illustrates it in a very practical way, "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

When we approach the altar of prayer the light of God's holiness shines upon us, searching the deepest things in our hearts and lives.

If in this exposure of the hidden springs of our being we find in ourselves feelings or qualities that are not right, we should instantly set them right. If we remember that yesterday we did something to another that was unloving, that we were unjust or uncharitable to him, we cannot go on with our prayer until we have made right whatsoever was wrong in our treatment of him. In order to do this, it may be necessary ofttimes for us to rise from our knees and go out to undo some evil that we have done to another; to perform some neglected duty before we can finish our devotion; to make restitution if we have taken aught that was his or in any way have injured him.

Children sometimes get literal views of great moral duties which startle us out of our easy notions. There is an interesting story of a boy whose prayer was brought to a sudden pause by his conscience impelling him to run away and undo a bit of childish mischief before he could go on. The story runs thus:

"'If I should die 'fore I wake,'" said

Donny, kneeling at grandmother's knee; " 'if I should die 'fore I wake——' "

" 'I pray,' " prompted the gentle voice. " Go on, Donny."

" Wait a minute," interposed the small boy, scrambling to his feet and hurrying away downstairs. In a brief space he was back again, and, dropping down in his place, took up his petition where he had left it. But when the little white-gowned form was safely tucked in bed the grandmother questioned, with loving rebuke, concerning the interruption in the prayer. " You didn't think what you were saying," she said apologetically.

" But I did think what I was sayin', grandmother; that's why I had to stop. You see, I'd upset Ted's menagerie, and stood all his wooden soldiers on their heads, just to see how he'd tear 'round in the mornin'. But if I should die 'fore I wake, why I didn't want him to find 'em that way, so I had to go down and fix 'em right 'fore I could go on. There's lots of things that seem funny if you're goin' to

keep on livin', but you don't want 'em if you should die 'fore you wake."

"That was right, dear; it was right," commended the voice, with its tender quaver. "A good many of our prayers wouldn't be hurt by stopping in the middle of them to undo a wrong."

It would be well if all of us had a little more of Donny's realism in our praying. It might stop the flow of our words sometimes, while we go out to set something right in the realm of action which in the divine presence we see to be wrong. But it would save us from some of the mockeries and insincerities of prayer which now so much mar our worship.

Here is another illustration from childhood. A little boy was counting his money on the morning of a Fair day to which he had been looking forward with eager expectancy. He found in his pocket one ten-cent piece, two nickels, and eleven pennies. His father watched him going over his money and said, "Little man, aren't you going to put some of that in your missionary bank for children on the other

side of the world?" "I'm going to the Fair," said the boy. "Well, I think it would be a good thing to put some of it with the money that is to help other children to have a life with some happiness in it," replied the father. "I am going to the Fair, and I need it all," said the boy.

"All right," said his father, "but come and say your morning prayer, and we will go down to breakfast." So the little fellow kneeled down and prayed for his family and home, that he might be a good boy, and then stopped. "Aren't you going to pray for the children on the other side of the world?" asked his father. "I am saying this prayer alone," said the boy. "Well, but I wouldn't leave them out to-day," replied his father.

The lad thought a moment, and then he prayed for the children in missionary lands. When he got up he took four of his pennies and put them into his missionary box. He knew that if he prayed for the heathen children he would have to give part of his money

to the fund for sending the gospel to dark lands. When at last he made the prayer, he gave gladly. He couldn't help it.

There are prayers, too, that we cannot finish on our knees—they can be completed only out in some field of active duty. Our neighbor is in trouble. We hear of it, and, believing in prayer, we go to our place of devotion and plead that God would send him the help he needs. But almost certainly, prayer is not all the duty of the hour. We cannot get the thought of the human need out of our mind. We must rise from our knees, go to our neighbor, and with our own hands do for him what needs to be done, and then return and finish our prayer.

It is our duty always to pray, to take everything to God. But usually prayer is not enough alone. When we ask God to bless others, it is quite likely that the blessing will be sent to them through us. When we plead for one who is in need, it is probable that his need must be supplied from our plenty and through our hands. We must rise from our

knees and go out in paths of love and service.

There is danger always of unconscious insincerity in our praying for spiritual blessings. The desires are to be commended. God approves of them and will gladly bestow upon us the more grace we ask for, the more love, the greater faith, the purer heart, the new advance in holiness. But these are attainments which are not bestowed upon us directly, as gifts from heaven. We have much to do in securing them. When we ask for spiritual blessings or favors, the Master asks, "Are you able to climb up to these heights? Are you able to pay the price, to make the self-denial, to give up the things you love, in order to reach these attainments in holiness, in power, in spiritual beauty?"

If our lives were as good as our prayers, we should be saint-like in character. Our duty is not to bring our praying down to lower levels, but to bring our lives up to higher reaches. "Bring back the colors," shouted an officer to a color-sergeant, who was far up the

heights, in advance of his regiment. "Bring up the men," answered the brave color-bearer from the hill-top. If we find that our prayers are beyond our living, our duty is not to lower them to suit the tenor of our living, but to bring our lives up to the higher standard of our praying.

Finishing our Work

Only a little shrivelled seed—
It might be flower, or grass, or weed—
Had fallen one day near the edge
Of a narrow, dusty window-ledge;
Only a few scant summer showers;
Only a few clear, shining hours—
That was all. Yet God could make
Out of these, for a sick child's sake,
A blossom-wonder as fair and sweet
As ever broke at an angel's feet.

Only a life of barren pain,
Wet with sorrowful tears for rain;
Warmed sometimes by a wandering gleam
Of joy, that seemed but a happy dream;
A life as common and brown and bare
As the box of earth in the window there;
Yet it bore at last the precious bloom
Of a perfect soul in that narrow room—
Pure as the snowy leaves that fold
Over the flower's heart of gold.

—Henry van Dyke.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

Finishing our Work

IT is a worthy desire to leave our work in this world finished. There is a sense in which no one's work can be complete. It cannot be perfect. The holiest endeavors are marred by faults and flaws. Our whitest days are blotted by sin. At the best, we miss the mark. We fall below the divine standard. The most faithful come to the close of their days regretting the incompleteness of their life-work and the inadequacy of their achievements and attainments.

In His last prayer, when He looked back over His life, our Lord said that He had accomplished the work which His Father had given Him to do. He said, too, that He had glorified His Father on the earth. How could even He make God more glorious? No man can add to the divine glory in itself. Can the little lamp

make the sun's burning splendor more dazzling? Can the holiest human life add anything to the infinite holiness and whiteness of God?

What Jesus says, however, is that He had glorified His Father on the earth—that is, He had made that blessed Name known among men as it never had been known before. No one had ever seen God. A few glimmerings of His glory had broken through the clouds in the revealings made by prophets and by other holy men, and in holy lives. Jesus came as the Word, speaking out of the silences of heaven to tell the world what the unseen God is and what His thoughts for men are. He glorified God on the earth in declaring God's love and mercy, His compassion, His fatherhood.

Part of our mission as Christians is to glorify God on the earth. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," says St. Paul. How are we to do this? We may do it by accepting every opportunity to speak of God to others, to

tell them what He is to us, what He has done for us. Then we may glorify Him on the earth in our own lives. We are sent to repeat Christ's life. He was the Word—the great revealer of God. We are to be words, little words, giving out gleams of God. We may do this in our love for others. We may be kind, compassionate, thoughtful, gentle, unselfish, helpful. "Love's secret," says Faber, "is to be always doing things for God, and not to mind because they are such very little things." It was a saying of Lincoln's, "Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who know me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower, where I thought a flower would grow." We glorify God on the earth when we go about serving others as our Master did, showing kindness, making the paths smoother for weary feet, giving encouragement and cheer to discouraged ones, putting more of Christ into other homes and lives.

We may also glorify God by living victoriously, cheerfully, unselfishly, helpfully. We

glorify Him whenever we show men a vision of God in our own life, even the smallest fragment of God's beauty—patience in enduring wrong, self-denial in love and service, humility in exaltation. It makes the world a little sweeter and brings God a little nearer to men when we live as Christ lived and repeat even in smallest measure His gentleness and truth.

"If I could live to God for just one day,
One blessed day, from rosy dawn of day
Till purple twilight deepens into night,
A day of faith unfaltering, trust complete,
Of love unfeigned and perfect charity,
Of hope undimmed, of courage past dismay,
Of heavenly peace, patient humility—
No hint of duty to constrain my feet,
No dream of ease to lull to listlessness;
Within my heart no root of bitterness,
No yielding to temptation's subtle sway.
Methinks in that one day would so expand
My soul to meet such holy, high demand,
That never, never more could hold me bound
This shrivelling husk of self that wraps me round,
So might I henceforth live to God alway."

Are we living thus? Are we glorifying God on the earth these days? Is He better known anywhere through our living, or through aught that we have done? It was said of one that he left a few flowers growing in this world after he was gone, which but for him would not have grown. Are there flowers of love growing in any heart, in any home, in any lowly neighborhood, which but for us would not have grown?

Jesus said that He glorified His Father by doing the work which had been given Him to do. We get at once this lesson that our work, like our Master's, is not anything we may find to do, anything we may choose to do —it is something which the Father has given us to do. Jesus was sent into the world on a divine mission. We may easily understand this of Him, for He was the Son of God. There was never another life like His. He was the world's Redeemer. It was fitting that the Son of God should have a work all His own assigned to Him. But we are so little, and the work we can do is so small! Can we speak

without irreverence of doing the work which our Father has given us to do? Yes; there is nothing haphazard in this world in which we are placed—our Father's world. God sent us here. He has a particular work which He wants each of us to do—a work which no other one in all the world can do. Our mission here is to do this work that has been allotted to us.

Jesus said that He had accomplished all that the Father had given Him to do. None of us can say this. How many duties have we only half done, skimping our work, slighting it, doing it negligently, indifferently? How many things have we left altogether undone, untouched, neglected? We have been selfish, we have been obstinate, we have been proud and conceited, we have had low ideals, we have been indolent, we have kept Christ out of much of our life. We have left great blanks where there should have been beautiful work. We have failed to be patient and kind. We have not gathered up the thorns and planted roses in their place. At whatever phase of our

life we look we see that we have not accomplished all that was given us to do. The most beautiful work done by anyone is flawed and incomplete. None of us have lived so nobly or wrought so finely as we meant to do. We have not the skill to fashion all the loveliness that our souls dream. No poet writes all the beauty of thought that shines before his eyes—his pen is not equal to the taking down of what his mind conceives, in all its radiancy and shining winsomeness. We all have our visions of life which we determine to work into realities, but with our best skill we fail and come short. The Master gives us the ideal, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." That is the standard for all Christian living and doing. We dare not lower it by so much as a hair's-breadth. It must always be kept before us and we must ever strive to reach up to it. Yet we never can altogether reach it. It always keeps above us, however high we climb.

Yet we should not be too greatly cast down by our shortcomings. If we have sincerely

tried always to do our best, if we have been faithful in every duty, doing what we could, we need not grieve. God is pleased with our efforts and strivings, though we fail in accomplishment. In the vestibule of a beautiful building, erected in memory of a noble and gentle woman, these lines are seen on a bronze tablet:

"The good she tried to do shall stand as if 'twere done;
God finishes the work by noble souls begun."

These words tell the story of every true and sincere life. We have great thoughts, desires that are born in heaven, intentions that are lofty and worthy. We do our work and it seems in our eyes most meagre and paltry. But we should not be discouraged. The good we sought to do, though we seem to have failed, shall stand at last as if we had done it. What noble souls begin, God finishes.

They tell us that in nature nothing is ever really lost. Matter changes its form, but not a particle of it ever actually perishes. As it

is in nature, so it is in life—nothing ever is lost. Many of our efforts seem to yield no result. We sow our seed and it seems that there is no harvest. We speak our words of exhortation, of encouragement, and so far as we can see no lives are helped, comforted, or strengthened. We pour out our love in earnest prayers for those in whom we are interested, asking that they be kept from evil and led in right paths, and our prayers seem not to be answered. But we shall know at length that nothing we have done has really failed. Some day all the hopes and dreams we have sincerely and diligently sought to make true, we shall find wrought out in beauty and waiting for us among the things laid up and reserved for us.

There are many ideals we find ourselves entirely unable to reach. They are too high for us. We strive to attain them, but our hands are too clumsy. We try to express the beautiful inspirations of love that the divine Spirit puts into our hearts, but the music is too celestial for our earthly lips to sing. We seek

to translate into the speech of earth the holy feelings and emotions which in our best moods struggle to express themselves, and we cannot get words sublime enough to interpret their meaning. But some day we shall find all these unfulfilled hopes, these unrealized longings, these unattained strivings, waiting in all their beauty.

We need not grieve, then, over what seems to have been failure in our work. What the mothers have sought to put into their children's hearts and minds, though it seems as if they had wrought in vain; what the teachers have tried to teach the scholars in their classes and schools, though nothing appears to have come of it all; what we have all longed to do for those we love, but have seemed to fail to do—none of these strivings, efforts, and longings have really failed; nothing done for Christ ever fails. Some day we shall find the things we have sincerely tried to do standing amid heaven's finished achievements.

"*God finishes the work by noble souls begun.*"

Finishing our Work

It is always most encouraging to those who are living earnestly to know that they are not working alone—they are co-workers with God. We may put into His hands what we are doing, however poor and faulty it may be, and leave it with Him. Some day we shall see what He can do with our little fragments of effort, with our failures, even with our sins, when we have repented of them and put them into His hands. We should never forget as we look at our work that God is in it all, that it starts influences which shall sweep on into eternity, and that nothing true and worthy in word or act of ours ever can perish. God uses little things, the smallest, the most insignificant, bringing out of them measureless results.

Let us leave our work with God and ask Him to make it a garden-plat in which all the seeds we have sown shall grow into beautiful plants and trees, for the glory of God and the feeding of hungry hearts and lives.

What Doest Thou Here?

"I have seen the vision of Thee, O Christ!
Now what wilt Thou have me do?
For the hardest work in all the world
I offer Thee service true."

"Go back, my child, to thy little cares;
Thou hast known them very long.
Bear for Me yet a little while
Thy feeling of bitter wrong."

"Lord Christ, I am ready for martyrdom,
For banishment, death, or pain."
"Patiently still thine heartache hide,
Sing at thy task again!"

"I am strong and eager and loving, Lord;
I have courage rare to endure!"
"Are thine ears averse to slander, child?
Is thine heart devout and pure?

"Glad art thou in thy neighbor's joy?
Sufferest thou his need?
Ah! Then I know that thou hast seen
The vision of Me indeed."

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

What Doest Thou Here?

IT was Elijah. He was not where he should have been. There was a place that needed him and missed him. Noble man as he was, strong and true and faithful in the main, here for once he had failed God. It is a high privilege to be a man that God can trust, knowing that he will always be loyal and will do his duty without wavering. It is a great honor to be a man that people can trust. Yet this honor brings with it serious responsibility. It puts us under the most sacred obligation to have others regard us as wise, turning to us for advice and counsel in their perplexity; or strong, coming to us for help in their weakness; or safe, fleeing to us for refuge in their danger.

No other motive for fidelity and truth makes

stronger appeal to our hearts than the consciousness that others are trusting us, taking us for guide and example, leaning on us, following us. A man who occupies such a place among men needs to keep most careful watch upon himself. "What would happen," asked a visitor of a light-house keeper, "if your lamps should go out some night?" "Impossible!" replied the old man, in startled tone. Then he went on to tell what would happen out on the sea where sailors trusted him and watched in the darkness for the shining of his lamp. Men who come to be trusted and turned to by others occupy a position of still greater responsibility. Suppose that they should fail! Suppose that they should falter in a time when many eyes are upon them, when many lives in stress are depending on them, what disasters to faith and confidence would result!

One writes to a man who had proved strong and brave and true, bold, yet gentle, telling what this friend had been to him, "a hero in a world of false ideals," then adding:

What Doest Thou Here?

"I would have you know this, know how dear
My heart holds what you stand for, for I fear
You might do something that you might not do,
My dream's embodiment, if you but knew."

There is not one of us to whom, in lesser or greater measure, this appeal may not be made. Somebody trusts us, believes in us, looks to us for strength. To somebody we stand as the very rock on which faith leans. If we should fail, the person's belief in Christ would be shaken, perhaps destroyed. How this consciousness should constrain and compel us to be true! Remembering what we have confessed ourselves to be, what profession we have made, what we have already done to win the confidence and the love of others, and what people now expect to find in us, we dare not falter or prove false. The Master will follow us into our place of flight and disloyalty, and will ask us with startling directness, "What doest thou here?"

The old prophet had fled from his duty. At Mount Horeb God met him with that searching question, "What doest thou here, Eli-

jah?" Every word in the question is emphatic. Think who Elijah was—a great prophet. Recall his splendid faith and courage a little way back. One of the finest scenes of all history is the contest on Mount Carmel, when Elijah stood, one man, against king, prophets, and nation. His whole story, up to the time of his flight, is one of noble achievement and magnificent faith. It was strange, indeed, to find such a man as that away from his place, in flight.

We are often called to stand in places of privilege and honor. We confess Christ before men, we sit at His table, we speak His name, we do worthy things for Him, we stand loyally for Him in great crises. Then to-morrow something happens, and we fail Him. "What doest thou here?" our Master asks in grief at finding us in some place where we ought not to be, or doing something we ought not to do. Those who have been honored by our Lord, who have been trained by Him, who have stood loyally for Him, yesterday or to-day, should never fail or disappoint Him. A

soldier, in the midst of a great battle, confessed that he would have fled from the field but for his character. He had a standard to live up to. If he had fled he would have dishonored his own name. He dared not run away, and thus blot and stain his reputation as a soldier, for the stain of cowardice is ineffaceable.

"What doest thou here?" The prophet had no duty there. He was in an empty wilderness. There was nothing there for him to do. There were no persons within reach to whom he could carry comfort or help. If the Lord had come to him when he was hiding by the brook Cherith, or when he was living quietly in the widow's home at Zarephath, and had asked him what he was doing there, he could have answered that he was there in obedience to a divine command. There may have been no specific work for him there, but he was doing the will of the Lord in his inactivity—his seeming uselessness was the divine plan for him just then. Sometimes God wants us away from the crowded thoroughfare, from scenes

of activity, in a quiet place, resting rather than toiling, waiting instead of running. Elijah had such days. Then he could have answered that the Lord had bidden him to wait. But he could not answer thus in the cave at Horeb. God had not sent him there.

Horeb was a sacred place, too—the mountain of God. But it was not a sacred place to Elijah that day, because his duty was not there. Even the holiest place fails to be a place of blessing if we are not there in accordance with God's will. The church is God's house and is holy. But it is easy to conceive of cases when men and women would be sadly out of place in a church, even at a holy service. God's will for them is work, not worship. If a physician, for example, should leave a sick-room when his presence and skill were needed in some critical case, when a life depended upon his instant watchfulness, and go to his church to attend a communion service, the Master would follow him, and would ask, "What doest thou here, Doctor?" He would be away from his duty.

What Doest Thou Here?

There may be times in the experience of any of us when it would not be our duty to go to a holy service, into our closet of prayer, or even to the Lord's table, because there is some duty outside which imperatively demands our attention, and which we may not neglect even in order to wait upon the Lord. We can meet our Lord only where He has appointed for us to meet Him, and sometimes this may be in the place of love's duty outside, in the thick of life's busy scenes, rather than in some sacred place of devotion.

"What doest thou here?" Elijah was doing nothing; he was hiding. He had no duty, no errand, at Horeb. Far away was work not being done at all, which he ought to have been doing that hour. The same question, asked so long ago of the prophet, is spoken to us every day. It is well that we should heed it, that we may not grow negligent concerning our duty. The Master has something for us to do each moment. There is always a place in which He would have us engaged. It may not be a conspicuous place; it may be nar-

row, small, uncongenial, or hard. It may not be a place for work at all—sometimes we are called apart to wait or to suffer. But whatever the place may be in which the Master wants us, any day or hour, that is the best place in all the world for us to be, the only fit place, the only place of blessing. The duty there may seem insignificant, but nothing else we could do would be half so great, since it is God's will for us. It may seem a small matter to speak a kind word or to do a trifling favor for another, but nothing is small when it is God's will, and the failure to do the least duty in any day will leave a flaw which cannot be mended. As Kipling puts it:

One instant's toil to thee denied
Stands all eternity's offence.

Let us listen for the Master's call to duty. Let us be where He wants us to be, and do what He wants us to do, no matter how hard it may be. The cost of refusal will always be greater than that of obedience. Let us never

fail our Master when He depends on us for any service or task for Him. Let us never fail those who trust us and look to us for faithfulness or for love's help.

Courage to Live Nobly

"My soul is sailing through the sea,
But the Past is heavy and hindereth me;
The Past hath crusted, cumbrous shells
That hold the flesh of cold sea-mells
About my soul.
The huge waves wash, the high waves roll,
Each barnacle clingeth and worketh dole,
And hindereth me from sailing!

"Old Past, let go and drop i' the sea
Till fathomless waters cover thee!
For I am living, but thou art dead;
Thou drawest back, I strive ahead
The day to find.
Thy shells unbind! Night comes behind,
I needs must hurry with the wind
And trim me best for sailing."

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

Courage to Live Nobly

OOD wishes at the beginning of a year or on one's birthday are pleasant. They give us encouragement and put new zest into our lives. After all, however, good wishes will not come true by the mere wishing. We make our own years, and whether they are happy and beautiful or not will depend on the kind of living we put into them.

In going forward from year to year one of the secrets of a true life lies in cutting loose from the past. No year is good enough to be a standard for the one that comes after it. Each new year should be a step in the mountain-climb, lifting our feet a little higher, into clearer air and heavenlier atmosphere. Whatever our attainments or achievements may have been yesterday, they should be no-

bler and better to-day. Everyone's past is full of mistakes. The whitest pages are flecked with many a stain. There are things in our memory of which we are ashamed. There are failures, neglects, and sins in the best of us. We should leave these all behind us. We should count them as rubbish, which have no fit place in our new life for Christ, and which must be given up.

Sometimes the past is discouraging. There has been in it so much that was wrong, so much of mistake, folly, or sin, that one is disheartened. But no past, however one has seemed to fail in it, should be accepted as defeat. The poet tells a beautiful story of the little birds whose nest had been ruined. As he walked among the trees in his garden after the storm, he found a torn nest lying on the ground, and began to brood sadly over it, pitying the birds whose home had thus been wrecked. But as he stood there and mused he heard a twittering and chattering over his head, and looking up he saw the birds busy building again their ruined nest, instead of grieving over its loss

and destruction. That is what we should do with the ruins we have made in our lives. We should not grieve and vex ourselves over them, nor spend a moment in regret which can avail nothing, but should straightway set to work to build again what our sin or our folly has destroyed.

Robert Louis Stevenson closes one of his prayers with these words: "Help us with the grace of courage that we be none of us cast down when we sit lamenting over the ruins of our happiness. Touch us with the fire of Thine altar, that we may be up and doing, to rebuild our city." These are good words—the grace of courage that we be not cast down by our failures, but that we may rise and cheerfully rebuild the ruins we have made in the past. Many people need this word when they come to their anniversaries. Things did not go well with them the last year. They spoiled their own happiness, perhaps another's happiness, too. Their fine resolves, perhaps neatly written out and signed a year ago, came to nothing. The ideals they set up,

honestly meaning to attain them, remain unreached to-day. There seems to have been only mistake, folly, and failure, and they stand and look back at nothing but ruins. Yet, however sad it all really may be, they should not spend one hour in grieving over it. Tears will rebuild nothing that has been torn down. Time is only wasted that is spent in grieving. We should take a lesson from the birds and, forgetting all failure, begin at once to build anew.

Brooding over the past, however foolish and ruinous it has been, is useless, only a waste of strength and opportunity. Nothing good ever comes of it. The Japanese have a proverb:

"My skirt with tears is always wet,
I have forgotten to forget."

Too many people forget to forget. St. Paul's way was better. He forgot the things that were behind, whether mistakes or attainments, left them altogether in the past, and, stretching forward to the things that were before, he

used all his energy and strength to attain and achieve them.

But it is not enough merely to forget the past. We must come out of it unhurt by it if we are going to reach our best. The question concerning each one of us is, not what a particular year brought to us of experience, but what we are bringing out of the year in our own lives.

Some people are hurt by what goes on in their lives. Some are hurt by temptation—wounded, scarred, weakened. Some are hurt by sorrow, their vision of faith dimmed, their power of endurance lessened, their thought of God perverted, their joy lost. Some are hurt by unkind or unjust treatment received from others—cherishing resentment and growing bitter. Some are hurt by honors which come to them, by prosperity, by success. Their heads are turned, and they grow vain and self-conceited, losing the sweetness and simplicity of their quieter days. Some are hurt by disaster, by suffering, by poverty, by failure of hopes and plans. They become broken in spirit and dis-

couraged. The problem of true and beautiful living is, not to make a set of circumstances which shall serve us well, giving us comfort and ease, ministering to our pleasure; but, rather, the problem is, in whatever circumstances we may be placed, to live worthily, nobly, victoriously, coming out unscathed, unhurt, bearing not a stain, stronger, braver, and truer.

A young man went through an experience of failure last year, losing all he had, the gatherings and savings of years of toil and struggle. He came out with his hands empty, but clean. He had lost his money, but he had not lost his honor. His manliness is unspotted. He has courage to begin in the new. Another passed through the stress of a great sorrow last year, but his faith failed not. Another had a year of burden-bearing which almost crushed him, but to-day he is as brave, as trustful, as hopeful, as joyful, as he was before he entered the year's testing. In all the world there is no one that can do us any harm but ourselves. If our heart remains true, if

our faith continues steady, if our spirit is always victorious, if we do not lose the song out of our hearts, the winds may blow as they will, and the waves roll as they will, but nothing can touch us in our refuge to do us any hurt.

There is something else. Forgetting things of the past and coming out of our experiences unharmed, we must reach forward and lay hold upon new and better things. Some people never do. They have no enthusiasm for growth or advancement. They may be ambitious for position, but they do not really strive for the prize of manhood. To be in a larger place this year than the year before is not promotion, unless, meanwhile, one has grown larger one's self and better. The only true advancement is in character. Each year should open new paths before us, paths leading up higher. Nothing but the best things possible are worthy to be ideals for us. As Browning puts it:

Endeavor to be good, and better still,
And best. Success is naught—endeavor's all.

We should think a great deal of the possibilities of our lives. We should try to realize something of the dignity and glory in us. We are not worms. We are not made to grovel in the dust. Yet there are those who do grovel, who live as if they were only worms. Think of an angel coming down to earth and living as some men do in this world, scrambling in the dirt for money, prostituting all that is noble in their nature in self-indulgence. Yet we are higher than the angels—"but a little lower than God." Do we live as if we were so exalted in rank, in standing?

Some of us are dimly aware of the great possibilities in us, yet lack the energy and the earnestness necessary to release our imprisoned faculties and give them wing. One of the most wonderful stories of the conquest of difficulty is that of Helen Keller. She was blind, she was deaf, she could not speak. Her soul was hidden away in an impenetrable darkness. Yet she has overcome all these seemingly invincible obstacles and barriers and now stands in the ranks of intelligence and schol-

arship. We have a glimpse of what goes on in her brave soul in such words as these: "Sometimes, it is true, a sense of isolation enfolds me like a cold mist as I sit alone and wait at life's shut gate. Beyond, there is life and music and sweet companionship; but I may not enter. Fate, silent, pitiless, bars the way. Fain would I question His imperious decree; for my heart is still undisciplined and passionate; but my tongue will not utter the bitter, futile words that rise to my lips, and they fall back into my heart like unshed tears. Silence sits immense on my soul. Then comes hope with a smile and whispers, 'There is joy in self-forgetfulness.' So I try to make the light in others' eyes my sun, the music in others' ears my symphony, the smile on others' lips my happiness."

Helen Keller, in one little sentence that she has written, discloses the secret of all that she has achieved and attained. This resolve, she herself says, has been the keynote of her life. "I resolved to regard as mere impertinences of fate the handicaps which were placed

about my life almost at the beginning. I resolved that they should not dwarf my soul, but, rather, should be made to blossom, like Aaron's rod that budded."

Some of us, with no such hindrances, with no such walls and barriers imprisoning our being, with almost nothing in the way of the full development of our powers, with everything favorable thereto, have scarcely found our souls. We have eyes, but we see not the glory of God about us and above us. We have ears, but we hear not the music of divine love which sings all round us. It may not always be easy for us to learn to know the blessed things of God which fill all the world. But if we had half the eagerness that Helen Keller has shown in overcoming hindrances, half the energy, think how far we would be advanced to-day! We would then regard as mere impertinences of fate the handicaps which are about us, making it hard for us to reach out to find the best things of life. We would not allow our souls to be dwarfed by any hindrances, but would struggle on until we are

free from all shackles and restraints, and until we have grown into the full beauty of Christ.

Sometimes young people are heard complaining of their condition or circumstances as excuse for their making so little of their lives. Because they are poor, and no rich friend gives them money to help them, or because they have some physical infirmity or hindrance, or because they have not had good early advantages, they give up and submit to stay where they are. The story of Helen Keller should shame all such yielding to the small inconveniences and obstacles that beset young people in ordinary conditions. They should regard their limitations and hindrances as only impertinences, to be bravely set aside by undismayed and unconquerable energy, or, rather, as barriers set not to obstruct the way but to nerve and stimulate them to heroic endeavor before which all obstacles will vanish.

"Get Leave to Work"

A little corner for my Lord, to till,
A little chalice for my Lord, to fill,
Some blessedness to know, of labor done,
Some quiet resting at the set of sun—
And comes God's peace to overbrim my soul;
Life hath no fragments. 'Tis a perfect whole.

Such grace as comes when hand and heart unite
To finish every task as in His sight,
Who stoops from heaven to give me, day by day,
His smile of cheer upon my humble way.
Such grace brings melody to flooding soul;
Life hath no fragments. 'Tis a perfect whole.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

"Get Leave to Work"

ORK is the divine law for humanity. The man who does not work, if he be able to work, is failing God and also bringing blight upon his own life. Work is part of the constitution of our being. Health requires it. Idleness has curse in it. God works, and if we are to be like God we must work too. Idleness is most undivine. The unhappiest people in the world are those who do nothing. They have lost the balance of life. They are out of harmony with God and the universe. Work is the law of life and a prime secret of happiness and health.

The work assigned by the Master is not the same for all. "To each one his work." We do not all have the same gifts and capacities. St. Paul illustrates this by a reference to the members of the human body. Each mem-

ber has its own use and function. Suppose all the members were eyes, how helpless would the body be! Eyes are important, but we need ears and hands and feet as well. Sometimes people chafe because they can do so little; but the smallest member of the body is essential. If it did not do its part, the whole bodily mechanism would suffer. And the least important member of human society has his place and his part to do, without the faithful doing of which there will be a blank in the great world's work.

We need not envy any other's capacity for usefulness. It may be more brilliant than ours, may seem greater, of a higher grade. Its influence may reach out more widely. Our friend may be able to speak or sing to thousands, while our stumbling word or our unmusical voice may make no impression whatever. Sometimes persons occupying small fields in Christian work grow discontented and seek something larger. But when we remember that it is the Master Himself who allots our work to us and assigns our place, we

may be sure that there is no mistake. Archbishop Trench's lines are suggestive:

Thou cam'st not to thy place by accident;
It is the very place God meant for thee;
And shouldst thou there small scope for action see,
Do not for this give room for discontent;
Nor let the time thou owest to God be spent
In idly dreaming how thou mightest be,
In what concerns thy spiritual life, more free
From outward hindrance or impediment:
For presently this hindrance thou shalt find
That without which all goodness were a task
So slight that virtue never could grow strong.

Then we do not know what place is really narrow or of little importance, or what work is really small in its value to Christ and the world. It may be that the seemingly almost useless task assigned to us some day or some year is of immeasurable importance to the kingdom of Christ. In preparing for a great battle, one of the most able and successful generals was assigned by the commander to the guarding of a certain bridge which seemed

entirely out of the field of conflict. The general chafed and thought himself dishonored in being thus kept out of the battle in which other officers were leading their men to important victories. He heard the noise of the engagement far away and fretted at being kept in his obscure place, with his command absolutely idle. But at length the line of battle swerved and moved toward him. The enemy was falling back, and the bridge he was guarding became the very key to the situation. So it came about that this brave and valiant soldier was in the end the hero of the battle. The commander had foreseen the importance of this bridge and had assigned his ablest general to defend it.

We do not know the importance in the Master's eye of the obscure position we are set to occupy or of the inconspicuous work we are set to do. It may be the vital element in some great providential movement. Certainly, at least, we can trust our Master's wisdom in our assignment. He knows why He wants us at this obscure point, why He gives us this little

task. Let us do the small duty just as faithfully, as carefully, as skilfully as if we were working in the eye of the whole world. Some day we shall know that we were assigned to the right place and to the right work.

"Just where you stand in the conflict,
There is your place!
Just where you think you are useless,
Hide not your face;
God placed you there for a purpose,
Whate'er it may be;
Know he has chosen you for it,
Work loyally."

Our work for Christ is more far-reaching than we dream. In the Master's work, character is important. We must be good before we can do good. There is a tremendous power in a strong and true personality. A writer says, "The most searching and influential power that issues from any human life is that of which the person himself is largely unconscious. It flows from him in every form of occupation, in every relationship, in rest or in work, in silence or in speech, at home or

abroad. There are hosts of men and women who are healers, teachers, and helpers, almost without being conscious of it. Light shines from them, and healing flows from them, at times when they are utterly unaware that the hem of their garment is being touched. The real test of the possession of the highest power of character and the most perfect devotion to the noblest things in life is not the quality of the direct touch—it is the presence of virtue even in the hem of the garment."

Those who would do the Master's work acceptably, worthily, should give, therefore, the most careful heed to their personality. The wise man says, "Dead flies cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odor; so doth a little folly outweigh wisdom and honor." In nothing is this better illustrated than in the power of personal influence. There are men who are good, with right principles, honest, true, upright, benevolent, earnest, strenuous in good work, but who have little faults of temper, of disposition, of manner; little marring habits, untidiness, carelessness

in speech, neglect in keeping promises; things in their business or social life which affect the purity or honor of their name; disagreeableness or unsavoriness in their relations with others—dead flies which cause the oil of their influence to send forth an evil odor.

No one can tell another what his particular work for Christ is. The kinds of work are as many as the persons are. "To each one his work." No two of us have precisely the same capacities, and, therefore, no two have precisely the same tasks assigned. How to find our own work in life is sometimes a perplexing question. For one thing, however, we may know that it is always something near at hand. It is never far away, never hard to find. It is said in Nehemiah, in the story of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, that each person built over against his own door. An artist wished to leave behind him some noble work which would make him famous for all time. Despising the common clay which was easily found, in which he had always wrought

as an apprentice, he went far and near in search of some fine material fit for the beautiful form he wished to fashion. After journeying over all lands in vain quest for what he wanted, he came home at length, weary and disappointed, to find in the clay by his own doorstep that from which he moulded the masterpiece of his dream.

Men and women are forever making the same mistake. They long to do some beautiful thing for Christ, but never think for a moment that they can do it in the things of the common days, while really the opportunity comes to them every day in the duties that seem trivial and commonplace. The common tasks of our everydays furnish us the elements which go to make the divinest deeds. Just to be kind to a poor woman, to a sick man, or to a little child, to visit a stranger, to feed one who is hungry, is fit work for the Son of God to do. We may always seek our work for the Master close to our hand. We may begin with the homeliest tasks that await us as we go out any morning and then go on doing always the next

thing, however simple it may be. That is the way God's will is made known to us. One act prepares for another and leads to it. Then some day we shall find that the common kindnesses of the passing days are transmuted by divine grace into gems for the crown of glory for our heads.

We must not make the mistake of thinking that Christian work consists merely in devotions and acts of worship. A minister preached one day about heaven, and his sermon was greatly enjoyed by his people. Next morning a wealthy member of the church met the pastor and spoke warmly of the discourse. "That was a good sermon about heaven," he said. "But you didn't tell us where heaven is."

"Oh," said the minister, "I can tell you now. Do you see yonder hill-top? In a cottage there, is a member of our church. She is sick in one bed, and her two children are sick in another bed. I have just come from her house. There is not a lump of coal, nor a stick of wood, nor a loaf of bread, nor any flour in that house. If you will go down town and buy

some provisions and some coal, and send them to that home, and then go yourself to the house and read the Twenty-third Psalm beside the woman's sick-bed, and kneel and pray with her, you will know where heaven is."

Next morning the man met his pastor again, and said, "You were right—I found heaven."

In the place of worship we learn of heaven's joy and happiness; out in the fields of need we find heaven in service of love.

It makes our work very sacred to remember that it is the Master who assigns it to us. Easy or hard, it is what He gives us to do. It must be right, therefore, for He is perfect in wisdom and perfect in love. Sometimes the Master lays us aside, and then we find our duty not in the active service but in the quiet waiting. But whether it is to lie still or to work—He knows how we can best honor God, fulfil the end of our existence, and sweeten and enrich the world in which we live.

Into the Desert

"Oh, souls which sit in upper air,
Longing for heavenly sight,
Glimpses of truth all fleeting-fair,
Set in unearthly light;
Is there no knocking heard below,
For which you should arise and go,
Leaving the vision, and again
Bearing its message unto men?

"Sordid the world were vision not,
But fruitless were your stay;
So, having seen the sight, and got
The message, haste away.
Though pure and bright thy higher air,
And hot the street and dull the stair,
Still get thee down, for who shall know
But 'tis the Lord who knocks below?"

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

Into the Desert

HILIP, the Deacon, was engaged in a great work in the city of Samaria, when suddenly an angel came to him and bade him go to the south, into a desert region. It seemed a strange command, but Philip instantly obeyed. "He arose and went." This is a fine example of the kind of obedience the Master wants in all His followers. There must be no asking "Why?" or "How?" no postponing of obedience.

Philip was popular and successful in Samaria. People thronged to hear him preach. He was doing a great work and was absorbed in it. We can imagine him, when he heard the angel's bidding that he should leave the city and go away into a desolate place, where nobody lived—we can imagine him looking into

the messenger's face and asking, "Why?" But not thus did he answer. It was the Master's work he was doing, and the Master knew where He wanted him.

Any of us may be called any day to go out from our ease and comfort into some way which is desert. No reason will be given. We shall not be told what the work is that needs us and awaits us there. It will be a self-denial and a sacrifice for us to obey. But we have nothing whatever to do with the reasons for the call, or with its ease or comfort. We may think the work we are doing now still needs us, that it would be destructive to it for us to lay it down or pass it to other and untrained hands. But we are not to raise any question. All is the Master's work, that in Samaria where now our hands are so full and where God is blessing us so abundantly, and that out on the desert road which needs us and is awaiting our coming. If the Master says, "To the desert," He knows why He wants us there. Somebody is waiting there in the desert for our coming.

We have nothing to do with the question of comparative need here and there. Sometimes men are heard asking about the relative importance of certain fields. We do not know what fields are most important. No one would have said that the desert way toward Gaza was a more important place for Philip just then than the crowded city of Samaria. Yet in the Master's eye that was true. Jesus needed His faithful servant and co-worker to explain a passage of Scripture to a perplexed man journeying that way. We do not know where He may need us to-morrow. We must be ready to go wherever He would have us go.

"'Tis written that the serving angels stand
Beside God's throne, ten myriads on each hand,
Waiting, with wings outstretched and watchful eyes,
To do their Master's heavenly embassies.
Quicker than thought His high commands they read,
Swifter than light to execute them speed,
Bearing the word of power from star to star—
Some hither and some thither, near and far."

The Master may not always call us away from activity to other activities. Sometimes He calls His servants out of the work altogether, to rest awhile. Activity is not the only kind of service which fulfils God's will. "They also serve who only stand and wait," wrote blind Milton. Not always, however, do we accept the Master's guidance with submission and joy when He calls us away from the white fields to the desert. We think we cannot be spared from the place of service. A Christian woman was lamenting her illness, which had kept her away for a long season from her loved work. There were shut-ins she had been visiting every month—she could not visit these any more. There was her class in the Sunday-school, in which she was deeply interested. She had hoped to lead some of them to Christ this winter. There were sorrowing neighbors and friends to whom she wanted to go with sympathy and comfort. She had many interests of Christ's kingdom on her heart to which she wished to devote these days. But instead of her doing all this

needed and blessed work for her Master, these services of love which her heart prompted, the angel met her and said, "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert." So she found herself called away from useful toil and loving service to what seemed idleness, wasted time, in a sick-room.

The experience is not unusual. But when thus called apart, do we obey as cheerfully as Philip did? "He arose and went." Rest is not always idleness. Inactivity is not always uselessness. The sick-room or the invalid's chair is not always desert. Philip found work, blessed, far-reaching work, in the desolate place where he was sent. Our place of retirement may be a very garden of God to us. We may find a table spread with heaven's food for us in the wilderness.

We are in this world not only to do all the good we can—to comfort others, to help people over hard places, to plant churches, to do mission work—we are here to grow into the beauty of Christ, we are here to do the will

of God. The desert may be to us a holier, more fruitful, place than Samaria. We know at least that wherever the Master sends us any day is the best place in the world for us that day, the nearest heaven of all places on the earth. We are Christ's, to be used by Him, when, where, and how He will use us, or to be laid aside, if that is His will for us. George Klingle writes:

A little tool am I; just one within His hand;
Just His to choose,
And His to use;
Shaped out at His command.

If He should lay me down, perhaps I might be sad,
And wonder why
He put me by,
And never more be glad.

Yet I would surely know, whatever He might do—
However choose
His tool to use—
His love was strong and true.

Just looking in His face, although my heart might break,
I could but know
He loved me so
There could be no mistake.

It is interesting to follow Philip as he leaves Samaria and journeys along toward Gaza. It is not unlikely that he wondered as he went on what the important errand was on which he had been sent. He did not know what duty was waiting for him. He knew he had been sent into the desert for some purpose, and so he went on, cheerful, watching and ready. At length he saw a chariot driving along the highway. "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot," said a gentle voice. So Philip had found his work. The rich man in the chariot was in need of his help. He was reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and he could not understand who the person was of whom such strange things were said. Philip understood, and showed the traveller Jesus pictured in the words.

We do not know any morning as we go out

what the Master's errand for us that day will be. We go with sealed orders. But have you ever thought that you are intrusted with a message from God for someone, or for many, each day? To-morrow you will meet some fellow-pilgrim who has a question he cannot answer, one that is sorely troubling him. God made your paths to cross—yours and his—just that you might answer his question for him.

There is no chance in this world. Jesus said that God numbers the very hairs of our heads. This means that the smallest things in our lives, the least important incidents, are included in our Father's plan, in His care of us. In an old English poet, not much read now, is this line:

"It chanced—Eternal God that chance did guide."

The meeting of Philip and the nobleman that day in the desert was chance, as men say, but we know that Eternal God that chance did truly guide. We see it in the story. God sent Philip to that desolate region that he might

meet the Queen's treasurer and carry a blessing to him. We see the secret working of God in this one case. May we not believe that the same divine love and wisdom work continually in what seem the chance meetings of ourselves and others? It is always true that all the ten thousand crossings and touchings of human paths each day have a divine purpose in them. You have an errand to every person you meet. You are sent to him with comfort, cheer, encouragement, sympathy, help, and you will fail your Master if you do not deliver your message or impart your comfort or minister your good.

We should look upon everyone we meet in any of the tangled paths of our intercourse and association with men, as a brother to whom God has sent us with something the other greatly needs. If we realized this, our heart would go out to him in love and interest, eager to be a friend to him, to feed his heart hunger, to make him braver, stronger, happier, a better man. We owe something to him—this man we meet. We owe him our love.

He needs us. We have something which God gave us to take to him.

The errand of Philip to this man in the desert was of the highest kind. It is a good thing to give a hungry man bread or a thirsty man a cup of water. The Good Samaritan did a noble service to the wounded man bleeding to death by the wayside, in providing for his care. It is a great thing when we are faithful in giving physical and temporal help. But there is a higher way of blessing others. When God sends you to those who are poor, in need, or suffering, do not put them off with money alone—if you do they will starve. Give them something of yourself; give them human interest, sympathy, love, kindness, something that will feed their hearts as well as put coal on their fire or bread on their table. Give them also the bread of life.

His Brother Also

"The look of sympathy, the gentle word
Spoken so low that only angels heard,
The secret act of pure self-sacrifice
Unseen by man, but marked by angel eyes—
These are not lost!

"The kindly plans devised for others' good,
So seldom guessed, so little understood,
The quiet, steadfast love which strove to win
Some wanderer from the woeful ways of sin—
These are not lost!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

His Brother Also

HE beloved disciple makes it very clear that if we love God, we will love people, too. Among other things he says, " This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." We may not separate the two loves; we must keep them together. They are inseparably united. The same writer says, also, " He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God, whom he hath not seen." So we need not profess to love God unless, at the same time, we love our brother, our neighbor. We love God just as much as we love people—just as much, and not a whit more.

John was the apostle of love. In tradition it is told that when the great congregation at Ephesus was gathered on Sunday mornings,

there would be a strange hush—they were waiting for someone. Then presently an old man would be carried in by younger men. His hair and beard were white as snow. His eyes shone with a soft, gentle light. After a moment's pause he would lift up his feeble hand and speak in low, tremulous words, "Little children, love one another." This was St. John's one great message to the friends of his Master. No wonder we find so many echoes of this message in his letters. He had leaned upon Christ's breast and had absorbed Christ's spirit; hence he was always beseeching the Master's friends to love each other. Really, there is no other lesson to learn. It is the lesson which takes in all others.

We sometimes get the impression that loving God is the only essential thing in religion. So it is, in a sense. If we do not love God, we are not Christians. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," is the first and great commandment. Nothing comes before first, and nothing can get before this—nothing can take its place. The second command-

ment is, " Thou shalt love thy neighbor " ; but you cannot get to the second until you have taken in the first. The essential thing in religion is loving God, loving God in Jesus Christ. Religion begins here. A gospel of love for men, with no antecedent love for God, is a gospel without life.

But the second commandment must always follow the first. Both are essential. As love for man counts for nothing if there be not first love for God, so love for God, if there be no love for man, is not genuine. The fountain of religion is always the love of God in us. But if there be the fountain, the well of water springing up in us, there will be also streams of water pouring out, rivers flowing forth, to cheer, refresh, and bless the land.

While I love my God the most, I deem
That I can never love you overmuch :
I love Him more, so let me love you, too.
Yea, as I understand it, love is such,
I cannot love you if I love not Him ;
I cannot love Him if I love not you.

Love is not a mere sentiment. It does not exhaust itself in mere self-pleasing. The first im-

pulse of a heart into which the love of Christ has come is a desire to do good or bear good to others. As soon as Andrew and John had found the Messiah, they hastened out to find their brothers, and brought them to Jesus. They did not stay all night with their new-found Friend, their hearts thrilling with the rapture of companionship with Him. That would have been a delight. But love is never selfish. It thinks always of others before itself. So the two men hurried away from the joy of their new friendship, to bring others to share it. That is always the result of finding Christ. It puts a new spirit within one. It changes the centre of one's life. Self is forgotten, and everyone about us, even the most unlovable, becomes interesting to us. We see in every person one to whom we owe something, to whom we are debtor. The person may be far below us as this world rates people, but to the lowliest our love will go out, and the lowlier the person the gentler will be the expression of the love.

A plain-spoken woman said to her daughter

who had been rude to a servant, "My dear, if you haven't enough kindness in you to go round, you must save it up for those you consider beneath you. Your superiors can do very well without it, but I insist that you shall be kind to those who need it most."

The first thing the love of Christ does is to sweeten all the life, the disposition, the spirit, the temper, the manners. One writes of a sweetbrier life. A little group of girls were together one rainy afternoon. One of them opened the door for a moment, and a wave of wet, green, growing things poured into the room. The girl at the door turned and said to the others, "Do you smell the sweetbrier down by the gate? It is always fragrant, but never so fragrant as in the rain." One of the girls said impulsively that this reminded her of her aunt. When asked to explain, she said, "Why, you see, there are ever so many roses that are fragrant—the roses themselves, I mean—but the sweetbrier is the only one whose leaves also are fragrant. That is why it makes me think of my aunt, because every-

thing about her, everything she does, not the large things only, but all the common, every-day things—the leaves, as well as the blossoms—have something beautiful in them. There is something in her spirit, a gentleness, a thoughtfulness, a kindliness, a graciousness, that goes out in everything she does, in every word she speaks, in every influence that breathes out from her life."

There are such people in every community—sweetbrier Christians—always gracious and gentle. Lowell writes of such a woman:

Blessing she is. God made her so,
And deeds of week-day holiness
Fall from her, noiseless as the snow:
Nor hath she ever chanced to know
That aught were easier than to bless.

Love for our brother should make us interested in all that concerns him. Love makes us his keeper, the caretaker of his life. Then the word brother is a large one. In a special sense it refers to all our fellow-Christians. All who love Christ are brethren. Every church should be a family. The members sit together at the

communion. They worship together at the same throne of grace. They should live together in sweet affectionateness. If one has a burden, the other should share it. If one is suffering, the others should sympathize with him and stand close to him in fellow-feeling. If one is in need, the others should share their plenty with his lack. The members of a church should live together as a larger household. They should be patient with each other, charitable each toward the faults and failings of the others, seeking always each other's good in all ways. They should live and work together in love, none seeking the pre-eminence or claiming his own way, but each in honor preferring the others.

One of the fine things said by King Lemuel of the good woman is, "The law of kindness is on her tongue." Think how it would change the conversation of homes, parlors, offices, and social circles if the law of kindness were always on our tongues—no harsh words, no idle or malicious gossip, no criticisms, no bitter or censorious words. Then not only in the speech

but in the conduct should kindness be the law. Barrie proposed "a new rule of life—always to try to be a little kinder than is necessary." That is what Jesus meant when He said, "Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two." The church that would fulfil its mission in the world must get something of this largeness of love into the daily lives of its people. It must not always calculate the exact measure and give just what is due; it must pour out love abundantly without reserve. It must be ready to do more than is required, to give without measure, to go beyond the letter of the law in kindness, in obligingness, in thoughtfulness, in patience and forbearance, in all service and helpfulness.

But while Christian people compose the inner circle of a Christian's brotherhood, there is a wider circle which includes all men. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," and our neighbor is the man who needs us. We are not to narrow our thought down to ourselves and a little circle

of good people about us and say that we have no responsibility for any others, that another man's needs and troubles are not our affair, especially if he is not a Christian man. A little girl was overheard finishing her evening prayer with these unusual words: "I saw a poor little girl on the street to-day—hungry, cold, and barefoot. But it's none of our business—is it, God?" Yes, it is our business. The people we know of who are suffering, in need, in danger, in the meshes of temptation, are our brothers for whom Christ died. We may not turn them away from us when they are hungry or in need of relief of any kind. We should never forget the King's words in the judgment: "I was hungry, and ye did not give Me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not unto these least, ye did it not unto Me."

There are greater, sorer needs than those which are physical. There are people about us, our brothers, too, who go hungry ofttimes. We do not know what walls sometimes hide

of physical need and suffering. Yet there are needs in which our brothers suffer which are greater far, deeper and sadder, than the needs of poverty, pain, distress, or sickness. While Jesus was touched by the people's hunger and suffering, it was their spiritual condition that stirred his compassion most profoundly.

All about us these days are those whose condition appeals to the compassion of Christ. They are our brothers, too. We say we love God—that His love thrills our hearts. Is the condition of those about us, who know not God, any of our business? If we love God, we must love our brother also. And it is not enough to be kind, to do gentle things, to give bread to the hungry, to visit the sick, to show a brother's sympathy in trouble. These ministries, however beautiful they may be, do not reach the deepest need. Our love must give the best, and the best is Christ Himself.

The Odor of the Ointment

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And He that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

—TENNYSON.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

The Odor of the Ointment

IT was Mary of Bethany whose ointment thus filled the house with its odors. The first reference in the Bible to perfume is in a figure of speech which describes God's pleasure in men's offerings. After leaving the ark Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices, and the record says that "Jehovah smelled a sweet savor." The smoke of the offering as it ascended toward heaven was fragrant to God.

In the ancient tabernacle the golden altar was for the offering of incense. A special prescription was given for this incense. This compound, carefully prepared by the apothecary's art, when cast upon the fire, sent forth rich perfume which filled all the place. Incense was the symbol of prayer. Prayer is fragrant to God. A beautiful rabbinical le-

gend, put into verse by Longfellow, tells of an angel who is called the angel of prayer. At the outermost gates of the City Celestial this angel stands, ever "listening breathless to sounds that ascend from below,"

From the spirits on earth that adore,
From the souls that entreat and implore
In the fervor and passion of prayer:
From the hearts that are broken with losses
And weary with dragging the crosses
Too heavy for mortals to bear.

And he gathers the prayers as he stands,
And they change into flowers in his hands,
Into garlands of purple and red;
And beneath the great arch of the portal,
Through the streets of the City Immortal
Is wafted the fragrance they shed.

It is only a legend, but its teaching is very beautiful. Prayers when they reach heaven become fragrant roses, pouring out their holy perfume before God. As from gardens of flowers blooming on the earth perfume rises, sweetening all the air, so from homes and hearts of praying ones, God's children in this

world, there rises continually to God holy incense, a pure offering, fragrant odor. God smells a sweet savor when we pray believingly, sincerely, adoringly, with love.

Perfume stands also in the Scriptures as a symbol of personal influence. " Thy name is as ointment poured forth." Influence is something which distils from every life. It cannot be weighed, nor photographed, nor measured, and yet it is the most real thing about a man. It gathers unto itself all that belongs to a life. The whole of one's biography is condensed into it. A baby has no influence because, as yet, it has no personality. Its name stands for nothing. The baby has no character as yet. It has done nothing to give its name any meaning or any distinction. But as it grows into boyhood and then into manhood, the name comes to mean something. There gathers into it all that there is in the life. The acts, the dispositions, the impressions left by the boy's conduct, his behavior, his spirit, his treatment of others, the way he meets his duties, the temper he reveals in contact with

other men—all these expressions of the character grow into the name. If he is selfish, sordid, false, unkind, cruel, these qualities give tone to the name wherever it is known. If he has lived worthily, unselfishly, helpfully, honorably, purely, his influence is in accordance with the life he has lived and the personality he has attained.

Influence is the composite of all one's life. From acres of flowers men extract the perfume, and it is all put into a little vial which contains but an ounce or two. For instance, it is said that a hundred and fifty pounds of rose-leaves yield less than an ounce of the attar of roses. So from years of life, with all its acts and words and expressions, its revealings of character and disposition, all the emanations of personality, results that mysterious thing which we call a man's influence.

There are some good people of whom it would be impossible to write a biography worth reading. They have done nothing striking, nothing that would be considered of sufficient

value or interest to put into a book. They have lived plain, simple, obscure lives, out of the world's sight for the most part. Yet they have gone about doing good continually. Every day they have left behind them a story of kindness shown, of help and cheer given, of gentle impressions made, of inspirations imparted to others' lives. In their quiet, inconspicuous way they have done more to touch the lives of others with good than many who are always in the public eye. As God looks down upon them their lives are most fruitful of good. The world is sweeter because they have lived in it and passed through it. Yet their life is absolutely uneventful. There is not a single incident in it picturesque enough to make an interesting newspaper paragraph. That which makes their lives worth while to God and men is the gentle aroma which pours forth from their personality, like perfume from a garden of roses.

The odor of Mary's ointment was a beautiful emblem of Mary's life. It is well to look for the secret of the influence which this simple

village maiden attained in the world. She was not an active follower of Christ save in her own home and in her own quiet daily life. She did not leave all and go with Him, as some other women did. Her name is not connected, even in tradition, with anything startling or great. What was the secret of Mary's immortal influence? The first glimpse we have of her we see her sitting at the Master's feet as a learner. Into her heart she received the words of the Master, and these words were life to her. Like a handful of spices they fell into her heart and transformed her life into radiant beauty. We do not know anything about her personal appearance, whether she was beautiful or not. There is no indication that she was clever, that she was brilliant, that she was in any way specially attractive. But the words of Christ in her life made it beautiful with all divine beauty.

There is a story of one who in her early days was said to be the homeliest girl in the village where she lived. But instead of being disheartened by her lack of personal beauty, she said

to herself, "I will make my life so beautiful that people will love me in spite of my ugly features." So she set herself to work, under the training of Christ, to grow into loveliness of spirit. She gave up her whole heart to the divine love. She let Christ into her whole being. She took lessons from Christ, lessons of gentleness, patience, thoughtfulness, kindness, humility, graciousness. She sought every opportunity to do good to others. If there was trouble in any home, sorrow or need or want, she was sure to be there with her gentle ministries. If anyone was sick or if any were in sorrow, she found her way to their doors with sympathy and thoughtful love. In due time she became known everywhere as the angel of the village. Her face never grew any more beautiful save as beneath its homeliness a gentle radiance of peace and love shone. But her life became so like Christ's, she was such a minister of good to everyone, her disposition was so sweet, her life was so beautiful, that people forgot that she was homely in feature and loved her because they saw Christ in her.

Few women of her generation have left a deeper impression upon the world than she did. Her village, indeed the whole Christian community, was filled with the odor of her sweet life.

Girlhood has almost infinite possibilities. Personal beauty may have its charm, but personal beauty leaves no perfume in the world, unless there be a life back of it which corresponds to it. There are beautiful girls in every community who do not fill any house with the odor of their lives. They are selfish, vain, thoughtless, perhaps irreverent, sometimes proud, even trivial in their lives. The only way a young woman can repeat Mary's story and fill her neighborhood, or even her own home, with the sweetness of her life, is to make it truly a Christ-like life. She must sit at Christ's feet and let Christ's words fill her heart and permeate all her being. She must cultivate the virtues which alone give real beauty to any one—love, joy, peace, gentleness, patience, humility, and all the Christian graces.

The true transformation of a life begins with

what we call the new birth—that is, with the coming of Christ into the heart. The beautiful life is a transfigured life and the heart of love is the secret of it. We cannot build a sweet and Christ-like life round a bad heart. When we think of it, too, we see that what are called the passive graces have very much to do with making one's life like sweet perfume. The passive graces are such as patience, forbearance, meekness, humility, thoughtfulness. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek." Someone illustrates meekness by saying that it is like one of those fragrant trees which bathes with its perfume the axe that smites into its wood. The meek man is one who gives back love for hate, kindness for unkindness, sweetness for bitterness. Jesus never resented any injury done to Him. Men wronged Him, but He loved on. On the cross, when they drove nails in His hands and feet, His only answer was a prayer for those who were causing Him the excruciating torture.

Patience is another of the passive graces. Patience suffers long and continues to be kind.

It beareth all things, endureth all things, never faileth. Humility is another of these graces. It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. It is lowly and does not seek to be known or to have its praises sung. There are many Christians who serve Christ and bless the world in such a quiet way that they are scarcely ever heard of. They do nothing that makes any noise. Like the Master, their voice is not heard in the streets. They fill no offices. They take no public part in the work of the church. They never speak in a meeting. Their names are never in the newspapers. Yet their influence pours out in sweet, quiet, loving lives, like the perfume of flowers. The home in which they live and the little circle in which they move are filled with the odor of their influence.

Under the All-Seeing Eye

When I run about all day,
When I kneel at night to pray,
God sees.

When I'm dreaming in the dark,
When I lie awake and hark,
God sees.

Need I ever know a fear?
Night and day my Father's near—
God sees.

—Mary Mapes Dodge.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

Under the All-Seeing Eye

SOME people wish they could see Christ. If they could look upon Him, they say, it would be easy to love Him and to do His will. But if only we will remember that Christ always sees us, we shall have a still stronger impulse and motive to faithfulness and beautiful life. He knows us through and through. He reads our deepest thoughts. We cannot deceive Him. We may make men think we are good when we are not, but we cannot pass in Christ's sight for anything but what we really are.

In a series of New Year's resolutions this is one, "To be filial to God as a son, loyal to Jesus Christ as a disciple, brotherly to my fellows as one born of a common parentage to a common heritage, and true to myself, that I be not a hypocrite in the sanctuary of my

soul." To such a resolve this truth of the all-seeing eye of Christ should lead us—never to be a hypocrite in the sanctuary of our soul. Our Lord condemned no other sin in such unsparing words as He condemned hypocrisy. It is a pitiful play to be professing to serve God and honor Him, while the heart is full of worldliness and sin. We should give careful heed to our inner life. He with whom we have to do sees not as men see. Men look on the outer life; Christ looks into the heart.

Someone asked another, "Do you think our sainted ones in glory see us in this world and know what we do?" The answer was, "I do not know; but let us live always as if they did." That is what loyalty and love mean. What kind of faithfulness in friendship is that which does in a friend's absence what would not be done if the friend were present? Besides, we know that a dearer Friend than any merely human loved one does indeed see and know all. Let us do nothing that we would not do if we saw our Master standing beside us.

There is special encouragement and inspira-

tion also in this truth of the omniscience of Christ. He knows all that is in us, the truth, the love, the faith, the desire to be faithful and to live worthily—the good as well as the evil. We know, too, that Christ ever looks for the good there is in us, not for that which is wrong. He sees us with optimistic vision. It is not always so with men. Too many people always look for faults, weaknesses, failures, sins, in others. Some seem even to find delight in discovering wrong things in those with whom they mingle. But that is not Christ's way of looking at our lives. He is always watching for the good in us.

The Koran has a beautiful fancy about guardian angels. To every person two angels are assigned at birth—one the angel of good deeds, the other the angel of evil deeds. The angel of good deeds accompanies the man all day long and puts down in his book every good thing the man does, repeating it ten times, that nothing may be omitted. The angel of evil deeds writes down every evil thing the man does. At the close of the day they fly

home to God with their report. The angel of good deeds says to his fellow-angel, "Forbear to report the man's wrong-doings for seven hours. Peradventure he will repent and be forgiven, and then the record need not be made against him." It is thus that our Master feels toward us. He is quick to commend us for the good we do, for our obedience, our service, but He is reluctant and slow to set down evil against us. He would infinitely rather find good in us than evil. He considers our weakness, He knows how frail we are. He remembers that we are dust. He beseeches us to repent and be forgiven—that our sins be not charged to our account—and waits to be gracious.

Christ looks with compassion upon our lives. He knows all the imperfections of our work, but He is infinitely patient with us in our mistakes and failures. This was shown in the way He dealt with His disciples. Their progress was very slow, but He never chided them. He was the Son of God and the Son of man. There was not the least flaw in His life. He did all

His work perfectly. It is sometimes the tendency with very good people, those who know themselves to be very good, to be impatient toward those who are imperfect and are always making mistakes, to be intolerant of their slips and failures. But Jesus was not impatient with His disciples. They learned very slowly. They were all the time blundering and stumbling. Yet we never hear from their Master a word which tells of vexed or hurt feeling or of chiding because of their dulness or slowness or because of their many failures.

Christ is very patient also with us. He asks for our best. He sets before us the loftiest ideals. He says, "Be ye perfect." He desires implicit obedience. He calls us to the best service we can render. He wants us to do our work well. Yet He is pitiful toward our weakness, tolerant of our frailties and failures. He does not cast us off when we sin, but forgives us, not seven times only, but seventy times seven. He bears with our faulty work. He remembers His own human life, its struggles, its trials, its weariness and pain, and sympathizes

with us in all that is hard in our lot. He has not forgotten the days of hard toil and how unfair men were in their demands. The blessing of the carpenter-shop at Nazareth where He wrought has come down through the centuries, making the Carpenter dearer to men in their task-work and assuring them of divine sympathy with them in all their work.

"*In the shop of Nazareth*
Pungent cedar haunts the breath.
'Tis a low eastern room,
Windowless, touched with gloom.
Workman's bench and simple tools
Line the walls—chests and stools,
Yoke of ox, and shaft of plough,
Finished by the Carpenter,
Lie about the pavement now.

"*In the room the Craftsman stands,*
Stands and reaches out His hands.

"*Let the shadows veil His face*
If you must, and dimly trace
His workman's tunic, girt with bands
At His waist. But His hands—
Let the light play on them;
Marks of toil lay on them

Faint with passion and with care,
Every old scar showing there
Where a tool slipped and hurt;
Show each callous; be alert
For each deep line of toil.
Show the soil
Of the pitch; and the strength
Grips of helve give at length.

"When night comes, and I turn
From my shop where I earn
Daily bread, let me see
Those hard hands; know that He
Shared my lot, every bit;
Was a man, every whit.

"Could I fear such a hand
Stretched toward me? Misunderstand
Or mistrust? Doubt that He
Meets me full in sympathy?
Carpenter! hard like Thine
Is this hand—this of mine:
I reach out, gripping Thee,
Son of man, close to me,
Close and fast, fearlessly."

Christ knows also all the hard and painful things of our lives. Life for some people has much in it that is very discouraging. Burdens

are heavy, comforts are few. Men suffer much. Those who scarcely ever know a care or have a hard day or are called to endure even the smallest want, have little conception of what some other people have to endure. There is not one of us, however, who may not some time be called to pass through experiences of suffering, hardship, or pain. Let us remember that Christ knows all. Let us set this truth before our minds in such clear light that it shall shine in the darkness of suffering, pain, or want in days to come, like a star in the sky. If any time in the future we come into a place of gloom, when we cannot understand, when we cannot know what to do, when we can see no help in sight, no relief, then we may remember that He knows.

"*He knows the bitter, weary way,*
The endless striving, day by day,
The souls that weep, the souls that pray,
He knows.

"*He knows how hard the fight hath been,*
The clouds that come our lives between,
The wounds the world hath never seen,
He knows."

Christ knows us and all our life, and therefore makes no mistakes in dealing with us. In a private letter the writer says, "I sometimes wonder if my Master really knows how things in my life have become tangled, and if He really cares that I shall get out again into a way of peace." Yes; He knows all and He cares. There is nothing in any of our lives that He does not see. He is not indifferent to our happiness or to our good. Remember that He is the Master of the whole world—He overcame the world. There is no power that He left unconquered. There is nothing lawless, therefore, or out of His control, in all this world. There is no suffering of ours, no pain, no distress, which he could not instantly send away. The hard things that stay in our experience are there for our good and for His glory. Nothing sore or trying touches us but by His will. It is because He loves us that He lets us suffer. Let no one ever for a moment, in any time of suffering or sorrow, ask, "Does Jesus really know? Does He care?" He knows, He cares, He loves. We are in His hands. He is

doing the very best for us. Browning, in the lines quoted so often from Pippa Passes, voices a beautiful trust—

God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world.

That is true—"God's in His heaven." But it is only part of the truth. God's in His world, too. We have no absentee God; He is with us, closer than our closest friend. In His hands are all our affairs. He is shaping our life for us. When we think he does not know, He is leading us through suffering to blessedness. We may trust Him in the darkest hour, in the time of sorest pain, in the experience of keenest sorrow.

"If we could see, if we could know!
We often say!
But God in love a veil doth throw
Across our way.
We cannot see what lies before,
And so we cling to Him the more.
He leads us till this life is o'er.
Trust and obey."